

LutheranWoman

July/August 2005

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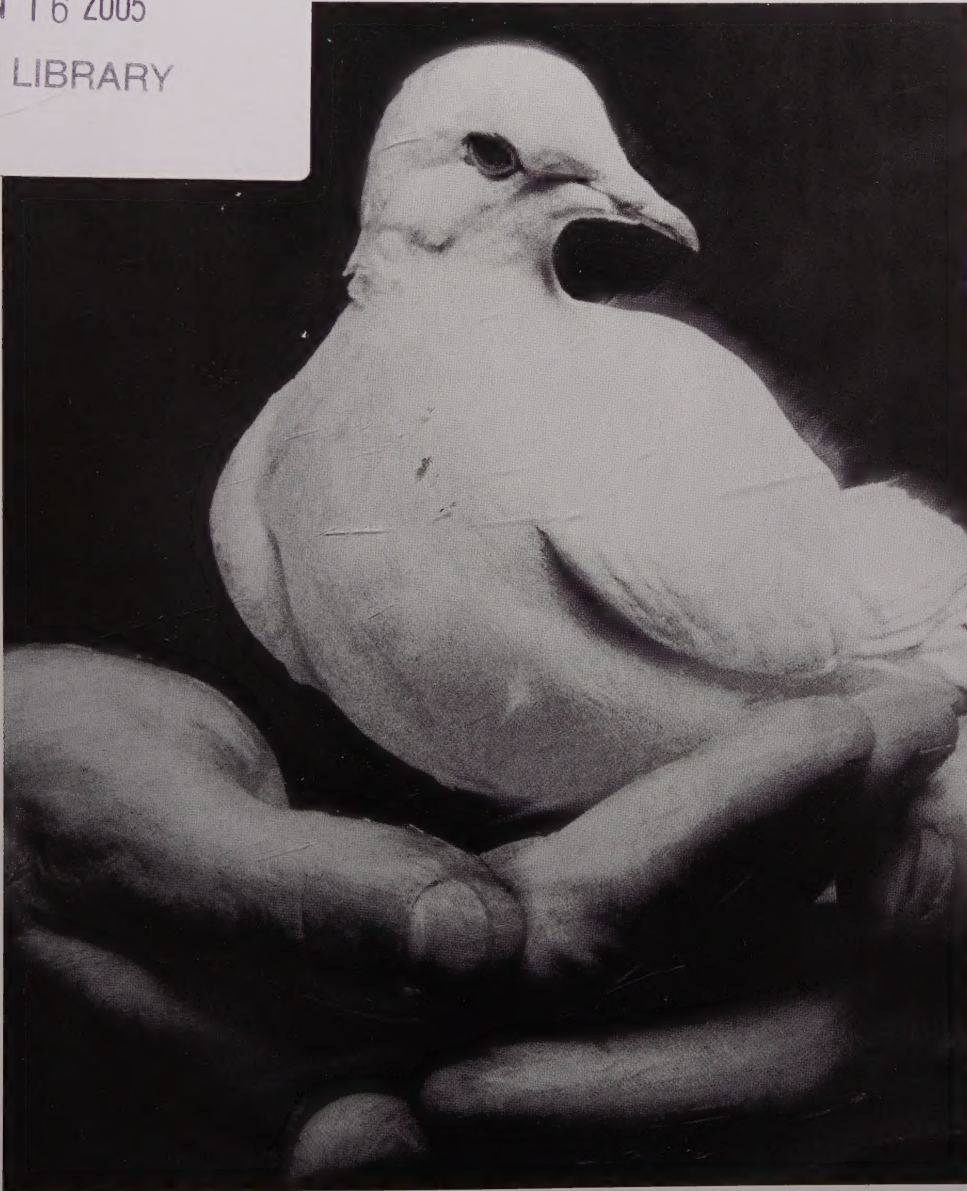
ECUMENICAL PEACE
ISSUE. SEE PAGE 4.

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Circles of Compassion
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Breaking the Cycle of Violence
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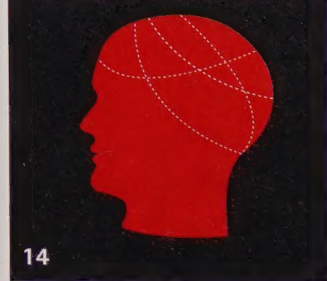
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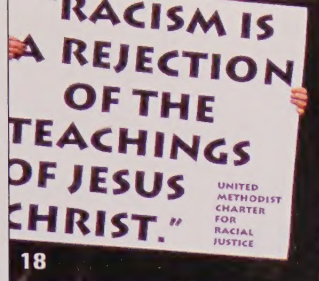
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 Managing Editor Terri Lackey
 Associate Editor Audrey Novak Riley
 Contributing Editor Deb Bogaert

Art Direction On Track Visual
 Communications

Cover Mitch Hrdlicka

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ACTING BOLDLY IN PEACE

The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good women to do nothing. Find out how Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian women in Canada and the United States honor and celebrate peace in this landmark ecumenical issue.

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PEACE IS IN THE AIR

I had stepped into another culture, one that thinks and talks about peace.

by Terri Lackey



I hail from Tennessee, and the subject of peace just wasn't a hot topic among my circle south of the Mason-Dixon Line. I'm not saying we were right to ignore it—in fact, we were quite wrong—but it's true. Our conversations tended more toward humidity, barbecue, and smooth whiskey. When I joined the staff of *Lutheran Woman Today* last August, there was a lot of excitement around planning a joint ecumenical issue about peace with several other Christian women's magazines. When I heard this, I

twirled my fingers in the air in the universal sign for "So what?" (I did this only in my mind, of course.) I had stepped into another culture, one that thinks and talks about peace.

Thank goodness, my understanding has grown. I've discovered that peace means far more than the absence of war. I've been paying attention to the idea of peace lately, and it's popped up quite a lot. I liken it to the new-car phenomenon: You buy a red hybrid, and suddenly everyone else has one too. Peace is in the air.

I will emphatically state that I am against the war in Iraq, and my heart breaks for the American, Iraqi, British, and other soldiers, civilians, and families who are caught up in the horror of it. I sport a peace pin on my lapel, flash the two-finger peace sign whenever I can, and wear a peace cross around my neck—but these small things do little to bring about a more peaceful world.

I heard a story on National Public Radio the other day that quoted the eighteenth-century English philosopher Edmund

Burke, who said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Or good women, I thought. That hit me pretty hard because that's basically what I feel I do, nothing. I think that's probably because, before now, I didn't know what qualifies as *doing something*.

I have learned by taking part in this ecumenical venture that peace comes in many forms. It is found within us (or not), and it can be manifested outwardly by feeding the hungry, offering shelter to the homeless, and comforting the afflicted.

For example: Twelve-year-old Megan Orth of Salem Lutheran Church, Catonsville, Maryland, traveled to Nicaragua recently to experience first-hand what a life of hunger and poverty is like for kids and their families. She brought that information back home and is telling us how we can help. And 63-year-old Lil Mattingly, a Catholic nun from Maryknoll, New York, is spending time in federal prison for an act of nonviolent civil disobedience. She took a stand against the U.S. Army School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), a military school at Fort Benning, Georgia, that has trained more than 60,000 Latin American

security personnel in counterinsurgency, psychological warfare, and interrogation techniques. This girl and this woman are brave and heroic.

But I'm not so bold. I'm not a protester, and I'm not willing to spend time in jail, but I can write letters to lawmakers if I see injustices. And I'm not much of a volunteer, but I can give money to homeless shelters and canned goods to food banks. In this issue, you will find ways you can make the world a more peaceful place—ways you may never have thought of, ways that may feel comfortable for you. *Lutheran Woman Today* and the following magazines are sharing stories about peace this month: *Glad Tidings*, published by the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; *Horizons*, published by Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); and *Response*, published by United Methodist Women of the United Methodist Church. Together, we will reach an audience of about 200,000 readers.

We started this effort more than a year ago, and since then, a couple of other women's organizations have expressed interest in joining. *Timbrel*, the magazine of Mennonite women in the United States and Canada, will offer many

of these articles to its readers throughout the year, and the Episcopalians wanted to be a part of the ecumenical peace effort by letting women know how they are working to end poverty around the world and to improve the lives of women and their families. You can read about their efforts at www.episcopalchurch.org/uncsw.htm.

We want you to join this landmark event by sharing and discussing the stories on these pages with others. We'd also like you to think about ways to celebrate the International Day of Peace on September 21. Try coordinating an ecumenical dialogue on peace and praying for those who don't live in peace. Also, from September 2005 through July/August 2006, *Lutheran Woman Today* will highlight women peacemakers in a special section, Global Spotlight: Praying for Peacemakers. Read more about that on page 40.

We all have gifts we can offer as we work together toward making ourselves, our communities, and our world more peaceful. Let's figure out how to use them, shall we?

Terri Lackey is managing editor of *Lutheran Woman Today*.

Knocking Knees and Courage

by Marj Leegard

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, SCHOOLCHILDREN WERE NOT ENCOURAGED TO ACT BOLDLY. WE SUFFERED whenever we had to recite, and we never even considered volunteering our own thoughts. Field Day at school—a favorite day set aside for competitive outdoor games—came in the spring. We practiced from the last traces of snow until the big day. Our opponents were not from Finland and Norway, but from the two other grade schools in town. We did broad jumps and high jumps, long races, short races, and relay races. Lincoln School had no uniforms, only our everyday

masters of the monster rope. I thought about the whole thing during lunch period, and as soon as Miss Anderson rang her little bell, I stood up beside my desk. The terror of speaking overwhelmed me. My hands were wet. My mouth was dry. My knees knocked. I said, “Lincoln will lose if I run the skip rope race, so I won’t.” By that time, I had tears in my eyes and a catch in my throat, and I sat down with a thump. There were no loud cheers, just acceptance, and then we went on learning Palmer method penmanship.

The terror of speaking overwhelmed me. My hands were wet. My mouth was dry.

school clothes, but we knew that those big strong kids were from Washington School.

At our school, the outstanding athletes in each event were selected to represent us, and I was chosen for the skip rope race. I could swing that piece of old clothesline and run at the same time without ending in a tangle of rope and legs. And then disaster struck. The word came down at one practice that old clothesline was not regulation equipment. A much heavier braided rope with wire-wrapped ends was issued, and I flailed away toward the finish line with no speed and no grace. No amount of practice improved my performance. The teachers stood in solemn groups and looked at me and then at the rope and made their decision. Since I had been chosen, I would be the one to represent Lincoln.

There were other classmates who could do very little with clothesline, but who were immediate

I don’t remember who won that Field Day, but I do remember the courage it took to stand up and say something. In all the years since the fifth grade, the wet hands, dry mouth, and shaky knees persist when we speak up, and yet we are driven to do it. It is one thing to agree with whatever point of view is being expressed and quite another to say, “But what if we thought more about this?”

“Christ has generously divided out his gifts to us” (Ephesians 4:7, CEV). And one of those gifts given to each of us is the place we are in the time we live. No one else is in our spot in our time. No one else has this opportunity. It lasts for a moment. The moment comes and is gone. Your understanding word longs to be heard.

LWT columnist Marj Leegard and her husband, Jerome, live in Detroit Lakes, Minn.



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CIRCLES OF COMPASSION

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT IS SOMETHING WE DO NOT YET SEE OR FEEL: A GLOBAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

by Ann Smit

As world violence closes in, tightening the ring of hatred and war, a pearl is forming. The media, in focusing on war and bloodshed, are blind to the momentum and power of women. In kitchens and living rooms, school cafeterias and offices, Sunday school rooms and synagogue basements, gathering at the well and walking to market, a profound movement is taking place. Thousands upon thousands of women are creating the foundational origins of peace.

Peace X Peace (pronounced "Peace by Peace") is a three-year-old organization that helps women organize and connect across cultural and religious divides via the Internet. Founded on the belief that achieving sustainable peace requires women to come into their full potential as leaders alongside men, it is dedicated

to creating a world where women are powerful and effective decision makers in building peace for all. Peace X Peace fulfills this mission primarily through its Internet-based Global Network that connects circles of women in the United States, one-on-one, in supported communication with circles of women outside this country.

Each sister circle may be faith-based or secular, formal or informal. Some examples of circles in the United States include church circles, sewing circles, book clubs, and extended families. Outside the United States, circles often include women striving to make changes in their country and the world—building democracy, caring for people with AIDS, providing financial means through micro-financing, serving faith-based orphanages, and more.

The outcomes of connections made by sister circles are many. Women exchange information, collaborate, serve as mentors, bond with, and educate one another to diminish cultural divides, biases, and misconceptions. Through such exchanges, women learn about each other, embrace their differences, and identify their commonalities. Strangers become family; compassion replaces fear; and peace is expanded.

Using modern technology, Peace X Peace connects women and provides the tools needed to strengthen their connection. Women move out of isolation and into a global network of mutual empowerment. In war-torn countries like Iraq and Burundi, women's voices, once silenced, are now heard. Stories and struggles are shared between circles, whose members, in turn, tell friends and family, creating an ever-widening, compassionate audience.

CIRCLE STORIES

East Lansing, Michigan, and Baghdad, Iraq

Barbara Thibeault of East Lansing, Michigan, formed a circle of college friends and colleagues that connected to a sister circle in Baghdad called "New Horizons for Women." After exchanging e-mails for a few months, women from both circles began sharing on a more personal level. They fasted together during one day of Ramadan and discovered ways to support the work of New Horizons in empowering young Iraqi women. Barbara's experience, presented in her own words, reveals how being in the Peace X Peace Global Network closed the gap that existed between the circles, caused by geographical distance, different languages and religions, separate cultures, and political systems.

"Months after forming and connecting my circle, I am still in awe of this up-close-and-personal witnessing of the Iraq war in contrast to the faceless war

portrayed on our nightly news. Circle sisters from Toronto, California, and Michigan share the privilege of learning from our Iraqi sister circle about how war is part of their daily life, invading the refuge of their homes. These Iraqi sisters see first-hand the sad human faces and hurting hearts that result from death and destruction.

"I'm a member of the sandwich generation, caring for my ailing mother and my family, while working at a meaningful job. In addition to this juggling act, I feel it is important to be involved, aware, and informed about the world and to share what I know and feel with others. Enter Lola, an 83-year-old friend of my mother's. She and three other of my mother's high school circle of girlfriends have met regularly for more than 60 years. Recently, the four of them called to plan a visit to see my mother. As we chatted, I longed to strengthen my connection to my mother's peers, and I found myself blurting out that I, too, am part of a circle. I described my relationship with my sister circle in Iraq, fully aware of the risk of rumors that I had indeed gone over the line and was communicating with terrorists. I shared details of the last e-mail I received from one sister in Baghdad about a nearby explosion causing all the glass in her home to shatter. She told about how she spent days cleaning glass out of her furniture and gardens. She also described how the heavy military vehicles stir up so much dust it is impossible to keep her home clean.

"Lola reacted with understanding and alarm. She has friends with diabetes, and one sliver of glass in the foot could cause severe medical problems. What about grandchildren or friends with asthma? How could they breathe? The frustration of never having a clean house! Then Lola asked if I could send her the letter so she could share it with her circle of high school friends. Our Iraqi sister had assured us that

we could share whatever would be helpful in our peace work and thus began the gentle ripple effect of activism.

"Yesterday, our Iraqi sister's e-mail described listening to the bulbul songbirds in her yard while she sipped Turkish coffee and tried to hold on to hope, despite constant power outages and the danger that made her favorite leisurely autumn drives impossible. I can't wait to call Lola and share with her this new message and the feeling of connectedness I have with all my Iraqi sisters. Women's compassion knows no geographic, generational, or political boundaries. We are making and connecting circles of compassion. Without compassion, there can be no enduring peace."

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Rose Lord went home to Pittsburgh after meeting a Peace X Peace staff person at the Gather the Women International Congress held in October 2004 in Dallas

and immediately registered her peace circle in the Global Network.

In Nigeria, Pastor Amos Wheagar found Peace X Peace on the Internet, filled out the interest form stating he worked with Liberian refugee women in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and wanted to form a circle. There were many divisions at the refugee camp and Pastor Wheagar wanted to bring the women together in a way that would help them better understand and accept one another despite their different faiths and traditions. After receiving information from Peace X Peace via e-mail, 70 women (representing Christian, Muslim, and other faiths) began meeting once a week in a circle, and Pastor Wheagar helped them connect with Rose's circle in Pittsburgh.

Communication between the two circles became difficult when fighting broke out in the Ivory Coast in 2004. During lapses in circle communications, the

GET INVOLVED

PEACE X PEACE'S GLOBAL NETWORK connects your circle with a circle from around the world so that you can further empower one another's work as peacemakers in your communities. As a part of the Global Network, circles in the United States are connected to sister circles outside the United States through the Internet to share stories, support and mentor each member, and build bridges across cultural and religious divides and misunderstandings. Many circle resources are available from Peace X Peace, including *Peace X Peace: The Power of Circles*, a 16-minute video that reveals the power of collaboration, the benefits of new experiences, and the peace-building qualities of connection. Peace X Peace also provides a step-by-step guide for establishing a circle, inspiring members, and joining the global network of women committed to making peace a reality.

To learn more, write Peace X Peace, 2086 Hunters Crest Way, Vienna, VA 22181, call 703-391-8932, visit www.peacexpeace.org, or e-mail globalnetwork@peacexpeace.org.

Strangers become family; compassion replaces fear; and **PEACE IS EXPANDED.**

Pittsburgh circle members educated themselves about the conditions and struggles of refugee women in the Ivory Coast. They learned that women in Ivory Coast refugee camps are often targets of violence and prayed for the safety of their sisters in Abidjan. Today, their sister circle's stories are heard around the globe, and both groups agree these connections help them maintain their faith and hope for a peaceful world.

Durham, North Carolina, and Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo

The Rev. John Muhiana is a member of an organization called Peacemaker, located in the small town of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He contacted Peace X Peace seeking assistance for his orphanage and to register a group of orphans between the ages of 10 and 27.

In Durham, North Carolina, a Presbyterian women's peace circle facilitated by Lynette Williams wanted to connect to a circle in need, and the Peacemaker circle was a good match. Additionally, the youth group director at Williams's church is exploring the possibility of connecting members of the youth group to the orphans.

Change agents for peace

These circle stories affirm that we are all interconnected and that what happens to women and children in Lubumbashi, Baghdad, or a refugee camp

anywhere in the world affects us all. All connected circles share the spiritual commitment of active engagement: The Holy Spirit connects each member to God and to one another. Women within connected circles are God's change agents for peace.

Ultimately, Peace X Peace believes the multiplying number of connected circles will reach a critical mass that one day will tip the scales to usher in a new era of harmony and well-being where all people not only survive, but flourish as we love and nurture each other.

All women are invited to become members of the Peace X Peace Global Network, to help shift the perception of women's roles in building peace and healing cultural and personal wounds. It is time for women to come forward and the Global Network is a powerful way to multiply women's voices and bring a feminine perspective to the world.

Ann Smith served for 17 years as executive director of Women in Mission and Ministry in the Episcopal Church, teaching women how to start circles and transform hierarchical organizational structures into circular structures. As the Global Network liaison for Peace X Peace, Ann helps start, nurture, and connect women's circles around the world. Her circle in Naples, Florida, is connected to an Israeli and Palestinian women's circle in Jerusalem. This article was provided by *Horizons*, the magazine for Presbyterian Women.

Nonviolent Solutions

by Gayle Aldrich

I THINK ABOUT PEACE OFTEN. I WANT PEACEFUL RELATIONSHIPS, PEACE WITH MY WORK, SPIRITUAL peace, peace at the very core of my soul. I believe that people are essentially born good and peaceful, but somewhere along the line, circumstances change and the potential for evil enters.

It doesn't help that depictions of violence are so plentiful in the media—in print, cinema, network and cable TV, popular music, on-line. I even see it in cartoons. I can hardly find a movie that is free of violence. I find myself frequently turning off the screen or radio, and I am becoming more selective of what I will allow into my world so that I won't feel so besieged by violence. Violence and negativity have to stop somewhere.

Is violence really more prevalent today or do we just hear about it more? How can we as a society continue to hope to bring peace to our world, nation, communities, and homes if we are constantly inundated with images of violence, both real and imaginary? Support from others who want a more peaceful world is helpful. Faith is vital. But finding peace must begin within us, individually. Each one of us can play an important role in making the world a more peaceful place.

The Search for a Nonviolent Future: A Promise of Peace for Ourselves, Our Families, and Our World by Michael N. Nagler (Inner Ocean, 2004)

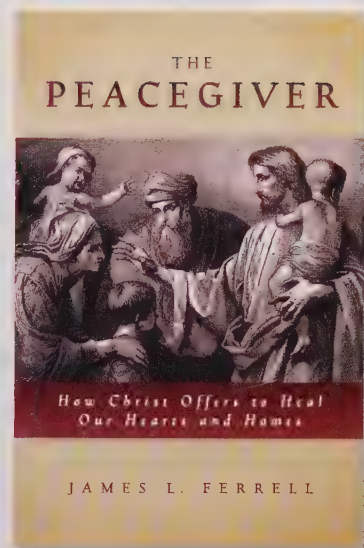
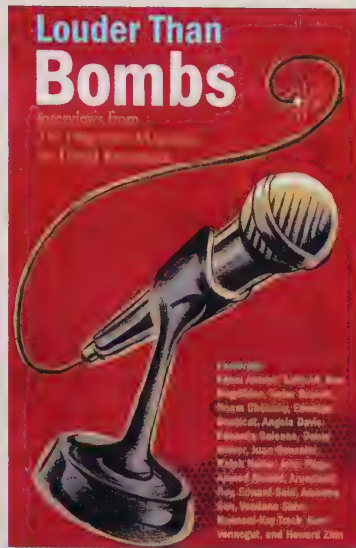
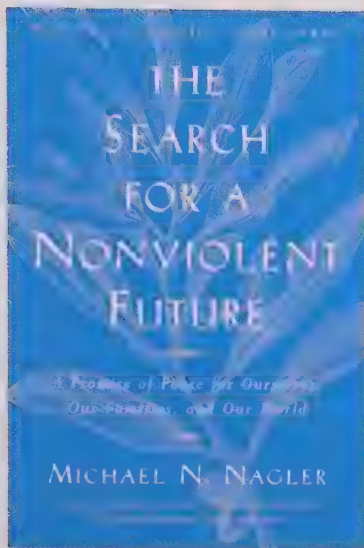
By looking at the history of nonviolence, this book offers a clear picture of peace and all it stands for.

Nagler reminds us that we are challenged as never before to deal with violence because of its pervasiveness in mass media. Whether or not there is actually more violence in our world, we hear about it all the time, thanks to modern communication channels. He points out that constantly hearing about violence makes us feel that our personal security is threatened. Paradoxically, Nagler suggests, because the media inform us so well about violence, they actually trivialize it in our minds. And, as a consequence, we don't talk about what to do about it. In fact, he says, we even avoid thinking about it. To think about violence would mean thinking about the "negative sides of human nature, which means the most negative sides of ourselves," he writes.

In his book, Nagler investigates the history of nonviolence and outlines the experiences of peace activists, spiritual giants, and farsighted politicians. His thorough research is evident in the nine-page index.

Nagler answers the questions: What is violence? How can we stop it? What can I, as an individual, do in my daily life today to make a difference for peace? How can I make a contribution to solve a problem that seems almost insoluble?

As this book demonstrates, peaceful acts that begin in your home or community can affect a life down the block, across town, or on the other side of the world. Nagler, a peace scholar and professor emeritus at the University of California,



Berkeley, offers practical suggestions for ways we can work toward a non-violent future. I highly recommend this winner of the 2002 American Book Award.

FURTHER READING

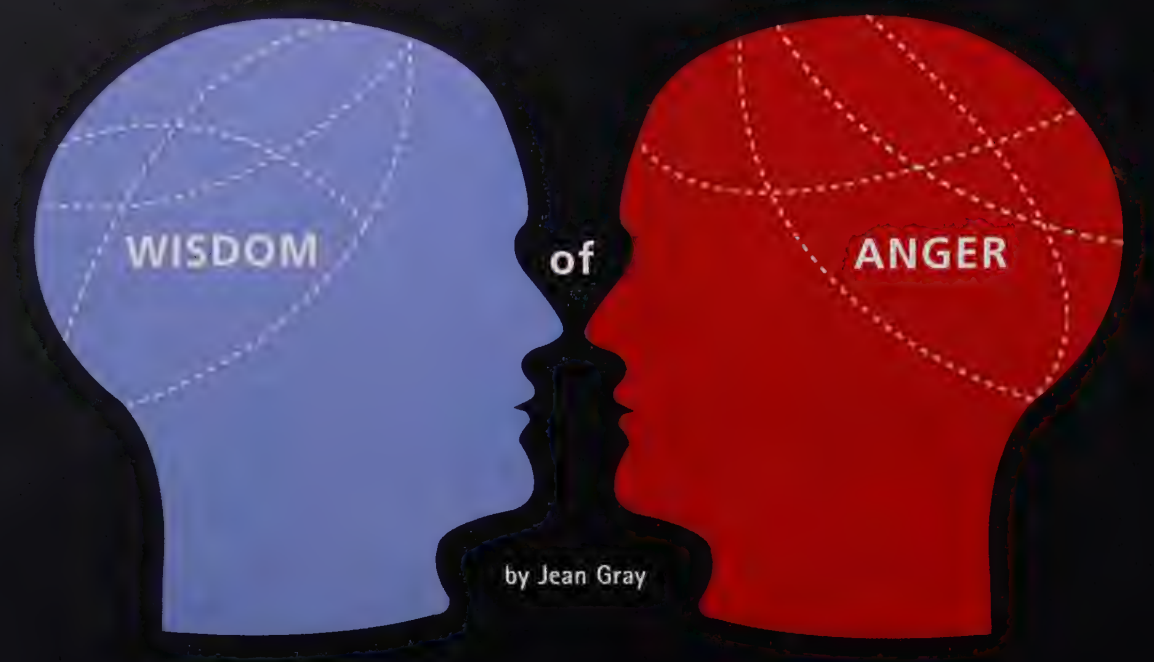
Louder than Bombs: Interviews from The Progressive Magazine by David Barsamian (South End Press, 2004)

Corporate power, foreign policy, the media, and propaganda: What are we to make of the direction our world is moving? In interviews published in *The Progressive* magazine, Barsamian talks to such activists, academics, and celebrities as Ralph Nader, Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, and Danny Glover about their passions and hopes for the future. The people interviewed are looking to make our world a better place. Social critics address issues from bioengineered food to homelessness to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Questions of values are discussed, such as why we make the choices we do as individuals, as communities, and as a country. This is a book about learning from the past and looking forward to a hopeful future.

The Peacegiver: How Christ Offers to Heal Our Hearts and Homes by James L. Ferrell (Deseret Book Company, 2004)

Every person who goes through a process of self-discovery faces feelings, thoughts, or beliefs that have puzzling origins. In *The Peacegiver*, you will find stories, parables, and events that will give you insight into confronting both the storms and the bright spots in your life. The book speaks to those who live in a world at war and battle smaller wars within ourselves. How do we give or gain forgiveness? Where does redemption come into play? And how do we make a success of hurtful relationships? Ferrell outlines how we can find peace in all circumstances through the hope and healing of Christ. This book is filled with parables and stories that teach and inspire and help us learn from those who came before us.

Gayle Aldrich is a writer and marketing specialist who lives in Minneapolis, Minn. This article was provided by *Lutheran Woman Today*, the magazine of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



For many years, inner peace remained misty and elusive to me; maybe this is true for you, too. Women are constantly faced with what we must do, should do, and ought to do. Our need to be perfect daughters, perfect wives, perfect mothers, perfect grandmothers, perfect bosses, perfect friends invades our minds like a swirl of smoke—and leads to perfect misery. To become more peaceful, we must learn to identify and trust the inner guides that are already a part of us. We must face—not fear—the anxiety and anger that boil within us. Once we do, we can become more peaceful people.

Last summer, I was enjoying an excellent lunch with several friends in a lovely setting. These three women had all experienced anger within the last few days and still felt uncomfortable about it, even though it seemed to me that they had good reason to be angry. As a psychotherapist, I don't see all anger as unhealthy. When anger comes to us as an internal message (a messenger), it can be a signal that something is wrong. However, anger can be a difficult issue for many of us because our culture suggests that anger in women can be unfeminine, uncaring, or even neurotic. Anger is a sanctioned male emotion in most cultures, but with women it is a taboo.

The goal of a workshop I held later that year, “The Wisdom of Women’s Anger,” was to help women who find anger difficult to express begin to realize inner peace. I wanted women to explore and celebrate nonviolent, healthy anger as a message that something is wrong and calls for our attention. I hoped to help women come to terms with the idea of positive anger, which can drive out the shadows of fear and anxiety that darken our spirits and clear the way to inner peace.

FEMININE PEACE

The word *peace* means different things to different people, but let’s look at it from a feminine perspective. For women, peace comes in accepting our full range of feelings as valid and valuable. Each of us has a purpose for living and should embrace the joys, sorrows, frustrations, and triumphs that come with that. Connecting to our feelings by honoring and celebrating them is critical to our emotional health.

When we try to create and sustain what the larger culture tells us is perfection, we are

denying who we are. We tell our colleagues, our children, our partners, our spouses, even ourselves that nothing is ever too much for us to handle. But that’s not true. In refusing to face our human limitations, in denying that constant multi-tasking can sometimes be too much to handle, we create inner conflict.

Inner conflict is the opposite of inner peace. Anxiety, fearfulness, guilt, self-doubt, helplessness, confusion, physical illness, alcohol and drug abuse, overeating, overspending—most of us have experienced at least one of these. We can recognize them in our friends or relatives. Many of us have denied a hurtful situation in our lives (unhealthy anger in others, abuse, infidelity) and unconsciously chosen these unhealthy ways of trying to cope. And for a while, they work, muffling our pain and sadness. But we lose our sense of peace. Some of us may have never experienced inner peace in our adult lives.

HEALTHY ANGER

Let’s be honest, not all anger is healthy. We might use anger to

gain a sense of control or power. Or we might become overly dependent on another person, constantly working for approval or acceptance, becoming angry when we don’t receive it. In unhealthy anger, we silently criticize others, especially women, who are able to speak up for themselves. Some of us become envious of stronger women and even more frustrated with our own situation.

It is healthy anger that women need to identify and embrace. As children of God, we are born with the right to all our feelings. Once we truly understand and believe that our emotions are gifts, we can claim the peace that comes with self-acceptance. Once we achieve this peace, we can resolve matters in our lives that trouble us.

Here’s the catch. Women who understand and accept their emotions and who value themselves can be very powerful—individually and collectively. And it seems that our male-dominated culture has little interest in encouraging this self-discovery. (I’m not talking about our enlightened men who believe in the political, economic,

PRACTICE FINDING INNER PEACE

NAME IT

- Name your feeling and validate it as a legitimate messenger that requires your full attention.
- Ask yourself if you are reacting or responding to the feeling. Reacting might mean withdrawing (going inward with fear) or attacking (going outward in fear). Responding means acknowledging a problem, observing the feeling it calls up, remaining calm, and working out how to face the problem.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Once the feeling is fully validated, think about it.
- Ask yourself what you should know or understand about this anger or other strong emotions.
- What occurred in your environment to bring it on? When did it arise and why? Is this a novel situation or part of a pattern?
- How did you come to have this feeling?
- Who is involved in the feeling or the event that calls it forth?
- List ways you could act on the feeling.

WRITE ABOUT IT

- Clarify and solidify the way you feel by writing about it. You can use writing as a safe and powerful tool.

AFFIRM IT

- Affirm your feeling and yourself, and give thanks to God for being uniquely you.

PRACTICE IT

- Practice becoming comfortable with your feelings so that you can regard them as gifts to be opened, acknowledged, and valued.
- Practice understanding your feelings so that you can uncover your strength, determination, and confidence.

The peacefulness that comes from naming, thinking about, writing about, affirming, and practicing inner peace gives you the tools to boost your spiritual life and spread love, joy, and peace to those around you.

and social equality of the sexes.) Shielding women from personal discovery has worked well for centuries. The messages and conditioning women receive from our upbringing—at school, in the media, and in the workplace—teach us to accept less than we give. If we seek to claim as much as (or heaven forbid, more than) others get, we are handed a plateful of guilt.

I know many women who have overcome the powerful cultural suggestion that they deserve less and are worth less, and the result for them is a sense of internal peace about who they are. There is a lot of this type of courage going around today, and it is contagious. If you can't exclude the word *selfish* from this discussion, consider this: In caring for ourselves first, we become whole and healthy enough to care for families, our work, our friends, our community, and our planet. Someone has said that caring for yourself first can be likened to a flight attendant's instructions to put the oxygen mask over your own face before you put one on your child. We must be fully aware, internally and externally, before we can help others.

THE JERSEY GIRLS

I consider the nickname given to four New Jersey widows demeaning,

but these women took on a frightening situation peacefully and assertively. After their husbands were killed in the September 11 terrorist attacks, the four became angry when their questions about their husbands' deaths were not answered by our government.

They proceeded in a non-violent way to get their answers. They had no connections, no money, no real way to reach the U.S. Attorney General, the FBI, the White House, or Congress. Still, they went forward. The widows were instrumental in pressuring Congress and the White House to create the 9/11 Commission, which demanded that the Bush administration make public the information it had regarding the terrorist attacks.

The women listened to their voices within and used their intuition and intelligence to find answers. They used what was natural to them—and all of us—driving force and reason.

PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS

Recently, an episode of *The West Wing*, a television drama about the White House, featured a female character's peaceful plan to resolve a prickly situation. In the story, tensions between Canada and the U.S. escalate at the beginning of hunting season when

some Canadian ranchers post "no trespassing" signs, even though people from Montana had hunted on their land for generations. The American hunters ignore the signs and begin setting out decoys, and the Canadians surround them. A high-ranking U.S. military official is ready to send in the troops. But Kate Harper, security advisor to the president, says, "The problem is not a few rowdy [Canadian] outlaws The problem is *us*! [We Americans] are still the wild bunch."

Then she offers a peaceful solution. She suggests that the Canadian official on the scene announce that anybody, American or Canadian, who discharges a firearm will suffer the immediate and permanent loss of their hunting license. The guys in the situation room nod. Yes, that might work.

We also have real-life examples of women in politics working for peaceful solutions. Mary Robinson, first female president of Ireland from 1990 to 1997, and Mary McAleese, president of Ireland since 1997 (re-elected in 2004 to a seven-year term), have been instrumental in ending conflict in their country and its neighbor, Northern Ireland. After generations of violence, Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Great Britain signed the Good Friday

Agreement (GFA) in 1998. The GFA established a power-sharing legislative assembly to serve as the autonomous government of Northern Ireland. Since then, violence in the island has been significantly reduced. These two presidents listened to their inner voices and have helped spread peace.

We ourselves can practice finding our own inner peace in small ways. Observe your inner environment, the river of anger flowing within you. Do this calmly and quietly, telling no one. Trust your answers. Write them down. Explore them. Then begin to talk about your anger with someone you trust. When we are honest with ourselves and non-critical with others, we can bring our lives back into clear focus. God wants us to have inner peace for many reasons—the most important being that we can be better instruments of God's desire for peace in our world.

Jean Gray is a psychotherapist in Oak Forest, Ill., specializing in women's issues. Her e-mail address is jgtherapy@hotmail.com. She is a member of the Church of the Transfiguration, Palos Park, Ill. This article was provided by *Lutheran Woman Today*, the magazine of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



ACTING FOR JUSTICE

How do you get involved with social action? Let me explain through telling my story. For nine years, I directed a hunger education and action program called Harvest of Hope—part of the Society of St. Andrew's ministry. Our programs introduced people to the reality of hunger in our world today, engaged people in a tangible effort to alleviate hunger, and enlisted people's ongoing participation in hunger efforts.

The goal was to change lives by creating hunger advocates. One tool we used was a video called "Remember Me," produced by UNICEF. I must have watched the video more than a hundred times. It features ten children from impoverished communities around the world talking about their lives and dreams. One of the children, Luis Molina of Guatemala, shares the story of his family, who have been

uprooted by an earthquake. For years, I listened to a line in the video that says, "Luis could not go to school because he had no shoes." I felt called to send shoes to Luis and children like him.

During my seventh year with Harvest of Hope, I had a new thought about these words. It finally occurred to me to question why Luis needed shoes to go to school. What do shoes have to do with a child's ability to learn? In

that moment, I began to consider the injustice that prevents children—and adults—from accessing opportunities that could open the world to them.

About this time, I was becoming more involved in my local unit of United Methodist Women. In response to a campaign, Making the World Safe for Children and Youth in the 21st Century, the unit sponsored an event to raise issues children faced in our community.

It was a small town, so many local politicians and leaders participated. For example, the police chief reported on local crimes involving children as victims and perpetrators; a family-court judge talked about children who appeared before him and how he tried to address them, especially on first offenses; a spokeswoman from Child Protective Services talked about her cases; and the superintendent of schools shared his challenges.

It was an enlightening evening. A small group got together after the meeting to talk about continuing the process. Members of the group met monthly to gather more in-depth information from community leaders about the children in our area, and we asked each of them what we—a small group of mostly older women—could do to help.

We got requests to become mentors to youth and to chaperone and provide refreshments for youth activities. Some speakers asked us to talk to the city council about funding youth programs. Others asked for help staffing displays about their programs and services at community events. Others asked us to recruit tutors. Some wanted us to help connect local services.

Our next direction became clear. We needed to work with

others, so we partnered with another local church of a different denomination, different race, and different economic resources. That partnership grew to a nondenominational Christian gathering and eventually into a community-wide effort when it allied with the local Red Cross. This community group now provides after-school programming and summer day camp for children from low-income neighborhoods.

Finding your way

My story is one way to do social action. There are many others. At the heart of engaging in social action—embracing “social holiness” in John Wesley’s words—is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is full of examples where Jesus lived his earthly life beyond the boundaries of his organized religious community. Faithful to that community, Jesus taught, healed, conversed, and encountered people outside the walls of synagogues or temples.

When Jesus confronted injustice, he challenged learned people of faith and the religious establishment. In his death was a witness against the occupying Roman government—a reminder that God’s kingdom is not of this world.

When Jesus touched the untouchable, spoke to women, ate

with tax collectors, and allowed a prostitute to touch him, he demonstrated a lifestyle of social action that meets real life. He offered social action aligned with personal piety as a model for faithful living.

Social action begins with homework. Too often we seek change for others without asking the people who are involved what they need and how to proceed. Too often we fail to see others already working for the change we seek. Homework includes listening to those in need and others in your community who share your concerns, whether they are people of faith or secular allies.

By working with others, we avoid duplication of services and competition for money and volunteers. Working with others facilitates comprehensive, holistic responses and change. Consulting and following the lead of those most impacted leads to real change owned by those with the greatest needs.

Julie Taylor is executive secretary for children, youth, and family advocacy for the Women’s Division of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries based in Washington, D.C. This article was provided by *Response*, the magazine of United Methodist Women.



by Amy MacLachlan

DAWN-MARIE WESLEY, 14, OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, KILLED HERSELF IN 2000. Her note said that death was her only escape. Three girls at school had taunted, threatened, and beaten her. The teen was bullied to death.

Bully Online (www.bullyonline.org), a British Web site, reports that 10 to 12 children kill themselves every year in Great Britain because they are bullied at school. In Canada, one in 11 girls ages 4 to 11 bullies others. In the United States, according to the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (www.safeyouth.org), more than one in 12 students in grades 6 to 10 is bullied once a week or more.

"It's a form of child abuse," said Debra Pepler, a psychology professor at York University in Toronto and researcher at the LaMarsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution. "It shouldn't be cast aside. It's very serious and is such a tragedy because young people take their lives when it's bad enough. At no point can we be complacent and think it's just a part of growing up."

Boys are likely to bully their targets physically, but girl bullies spread gossip, rumors, and sexual comments about their victims or encourage classmates to reject or exclude them.

Because of shocking stories like Dawn-Marie's, girl bullies have been getting increased attention. But this new awareness doesn't necessarily mean that bullying is on the rise. Mark Stokes at the National Crime Prevention Council in Ottawa said that because bullying was viewed differently 20 years ago, it can't be compared to today's statistics. "Bullying used to be accepted as part of growing up," said Stokes. "Now we say, 'just because it happened to us as kids, it doesn't mean it should be accepted.' But the feeling overall is that girls, although not at the same frequency as boys, are sometimes found in more violent activities and violent crimes than before."

The tendency to bully is influenced by several factors, including witnessing violence at home. Janet Creery of the Canadian Council on Social Development said that domestic violence has an impact on bullying. Since girls are at a higher risk of abuse at home, they are also at risk of being a bully or a bully's victim.

According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth conducted by Statistics Canada, 27 percent of girls who observed violence at home were overtly aggressive (defined as bullying, threatening, or physically attacking people), compared with 17 percent among those who had not witnessed such violence. Domestic violence was also associated with increased anxiety in girls—which can precipitate being bullied by others.

Girls who are bullied develop a sense of fear, exclusion, and distress. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 160,000 students miss school each day because they fear intimidation. "Bullying needs to be understood as a relationship problem," said Pepler. "Children in adolescence who are bullying others are learning to relate to others by causing distress. The victim is trapped in a relationship where they lose power as it continues, and they're

unable to escape once it is well established." Because being bullied diminishes a child's status among peers as well as taking away their personal power, victims often resort to bullying others to regain some of that status and power.

The new awareness of the seriousness of bullying has brought forth many peace-building programs. Some are school-based, with teachers trained in dealing with bullying issues. Others are community-led, and schools invite experts to lead workshops. Some programs are student-led, empowering youth to speak out against bullying. Drama, music, reflection, and games may be used.

The Ontario government introduced a Safe Schools Act in 2001 that included codes of conduct, disciplinary measures, and prevention strategies pertaining to bullying, said Bruce Cameron, the Toronto District School Board's coordinating principal for the policy.

Because bullying by girls often involves social actions such as taunting, insults, manipulation, rumors, and exclusion, efforts to improve the situation must focus on restoring relationships and helping bullies understand how it feels to be ridiculed by peers. "They also need to focus on the developmental issues of the child," said Pepler. "Some need much more

support in getting along positively with others." Because peers are so involved in bullying—85 percent of bullying occurs in the presence of a peer group—the peace-building process must include parents, teachers, principals, coaches, police, and peers. "It needs to be systemic. The problem doesn't revolve around one child."

Stokes said a program must not be narrowly focused. "A bully is not made in the school—they're just bringing it to the school because it's most easily manifest there," he said. "It involves a much broader cross-section of the community."

Bullying is a serious problem for young people. "People have always said, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.' Well, words can be extremely hurtful," said Cameron, "and, in some cases, far worse than sticks and stones."

Amy MacLachlan is a staff writer with the *Presbyterian Record* magazine in Toronto. She is a recent graduate of Carlton University's journalism program. This article was provided by *Glad Tidings* magazine, a publication of the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

the voice of EXPERIENCE

by Sara Lisherness

Elizabeth sat at her kitchen table enjoying her tea. Esther, her multi-colored hair still rumped from sleep, thumped down the stairs, holding a tattered photo album. "Morning, Grandma," she said.

"Morning, Esther," replied Elizabeth. "Where did you find that album?"

"In Mom's old room," Esther answered. "Could you tell me about some pictures?"

"Certainly. First let's get you something to eat."

As Elizabeth stirred the oatmeal, she asked what had made Esther decide to visit her rather than going home or doing something with friends for spring break.

"I didn't want to go home. Mom is so stupid and uptight," Esther ranted. "She has no faith in me and tries to control everything I do. I couldn't stand being around her. She never lets me do anything. I wanted to go to Colombia to stand in solidarity with workers trying to organize unions. Mom said it wasn't safe and wouldn't

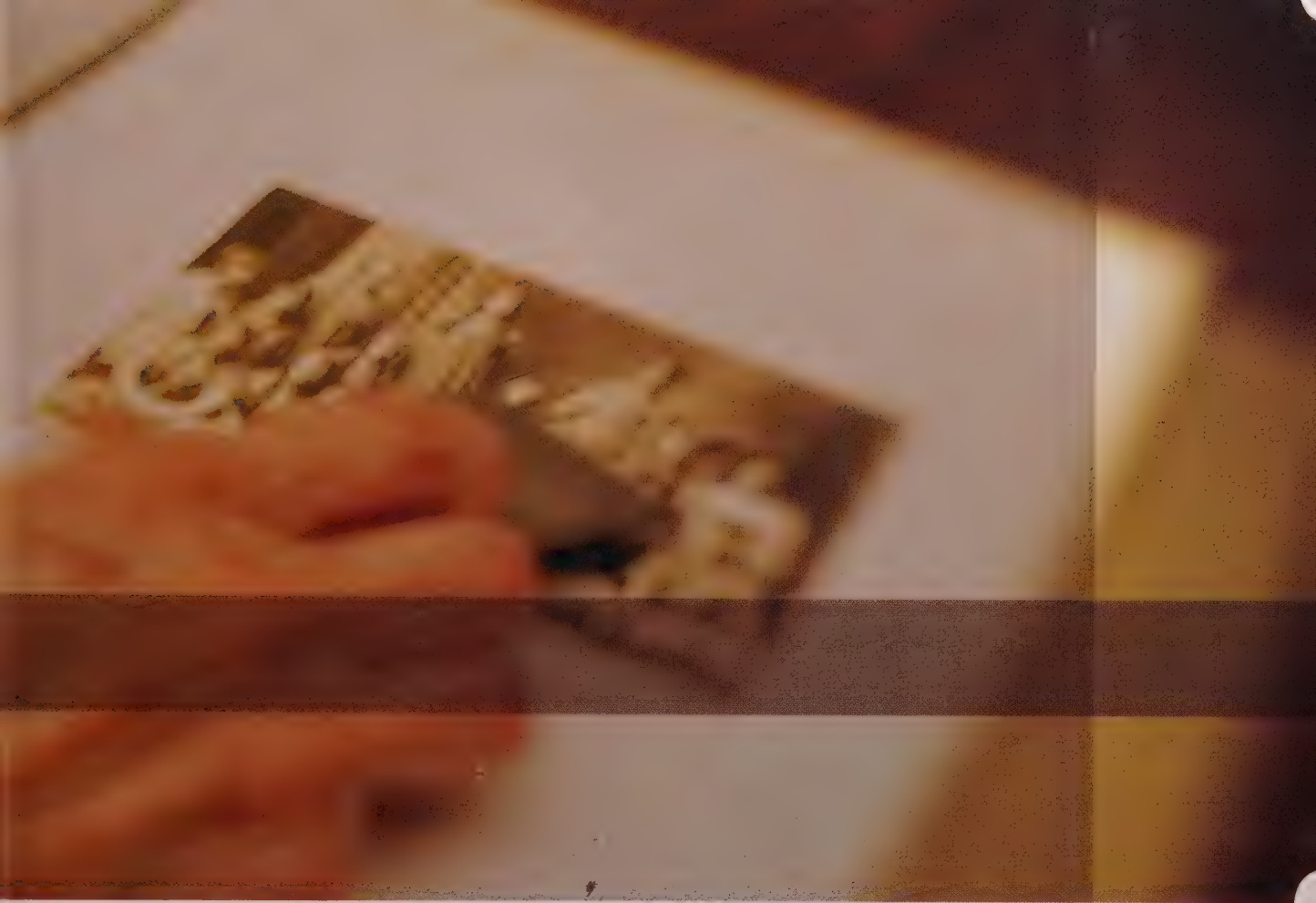
give me the money to go. We're completely different—she doesn't care about any of the things I do. She just doesn't understand me!"

Elizabeth nodded. "It may be good to look at that album."

Together they turned the pages.

"Where's this?" Esther asked, pointing to a picture of her much younger grandparents and mother walking with a crowd of people, some white, most of them black.

"That's the 1963 March on Washington—black and white people from around the country joined in



a peaceful demonstration to emphasize the importance of civil rights. Martin Luther King gave his 'I Have a Dream' speech. Our church organized a group to go and we came back determined to act against racial injustice. Sometimes we acted as we needed to; other times, we still need to grow."

"Why the church, Grandma?" asked Esther.

"The church has often been a voice for justice and peace in the United States and around the world," explained Elizabeth.

"Peacemaking is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"Peacemaking is about anti-war protests," exclaimed Esther. "Where's the connection to civil rights and racism?"

"Peace is more than the absence of war. True peace requires justice for all people. As long as people are poor or oppressed or God's creation is abused, peacemaking is needed," replied Elizabeth. "Here's a picture from an Earth Day celebration in the early 1970s."

"Mom looks ridiculous in that long dress!"

Elizabeth continued, "Peacemaking is done in many ways. Sometimes we seek God's peace for ourselves when we face difficult times. Or we pray for peace for someone else. Peacemaking can be done in our communities or schools, in our nation, or in other parts of the world. Peacemaking includes taking care of God's creation."

Esther asked, "How do churches that care about this stuff decide what to do?"

"Members of our women's group heard Dr. Helen Caldicott talk about the threat of nuclear war. She's a medical doctor who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her anti-nuclear activism," responded Elizabeth. "We heard how a 'regular person' could make a difference—that got our church working. This picture is me at the Salt II Treaty hearings in Washington, D.C. Women from churches across the United States were invited to participate in the hearings that discussed limiting nuclear weapons."

"How have you kept doing this all these years?" asked Esther.

Elizabeth smiled. "For me, part of following Jesus is seeking peace in his name. Over the years, our church has approached peacemaking as an important part of our mission. We pick three or four issues to focus on each year. Some we work on for years. Some are short-term projects. Whatever we do—a study on nonviolence, cleaning up the river, or advocating for peace in the Middle East—we try to get everyone involved in some way."

Esther pointed to a newspaper clipping. "What's happening here, Grandma?"

"That is a candlelight prayer vigil for victims of rape and domestic violence. Your mother organized it when she was in college. With some other folks, she started the first crisis hotline and then raised money for a domestic violence shelter."

"I can't believe it!" Esther exclaimed. "All she ever does anymore is work."

Elizabeth replied, "Don't underestimate her. She has a strong commitment to many of the same concerns you have. She just approaches them differently right now. You might not know that she still volunteers by keeping financial records for the shelter and a couple of other organizations. Working for peace and justice is a lifelong task. Sometimes it's all-consuming; sometimes it's one aspect of a very busy and full life. It's not just what we do that matters; it's how we live our lives. Being a peacemaker means treating others with dignity and respect, even when we disagree. It means

meeting people where they are on their peacemaking journey, not where we want them to be. Tell me, Esther, what's your vision for a more peaceful world? What peacemaking do you want to do?"

Esther thought for a moment. "I really want to help the people of Colombia."

"Is this trip to Colombia you want to go on the only way to do that?" Elizabeth inquired.

Esther answered, "Well, some people are going to Washington to talk to a senator about Colombia."

"Maybe you could go along with them," said Elizabeth. The doorbell rang and Elizabeth went to answer it.

As Elizabeth started down the hallway, she overheard Esther pick up the phone and after a few moments say, "Hey, Mom. It's Esther."

Sara Lisherness is the coordinator for the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. This article was provided by *Horizons*, the magazine for Presbyterian Women.

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by Ingrid Christiansen

Breaking the Cycle of Violence



There is probably no one among us who does not hope for peace. We address one another on Sunday mornings with "The peace of the Lord be with you." We use the word "peace" when we close a letter or e-mail and when we say goodbye. We hope for peace in our later years. And we rejoice when we find a peaceful place to live.

Why do we constantly invoke something that should be easy to come by—an absence of violence and the presence of good will locally, nationally, and globally? What makes peace so longed for, yet so elusive?

When I was growing up, my parents did not hit us or even raise their voices to us, their five children. I imagined all households were that way. No one in my neighborhood acted in any way that would have suggested to us that force was a way to solve problems. I imagined the world to be a fair and kind place.

Every day now, however, in my work I see the failure of the world to be fair and kind. I work in the criminal justice system on the defense teams of people facing possible death sentences. My job as a capital mitigation specialist is to learn the story of the defendant's life so that I can explain to a judge and jury why this man or woman committed this terrible crime. My goal is to save my clients from the death penalty.

I spend many hours with my clients in jail or prison. During our time together, we explore their family roots and what led to their crime. We also discuss the gifts and contributions they have to offer the world. I mostly see their sorrow, regret, and anger. But sometimes I see their hope and joy. I accompany these men and women as they come to terms with what they have done and what that has done to their lives. Most of them will spend the rest of their lives in prison whether or

not they are sentenced to death. Although this is hard for them to accept, they know it is the penalty for the pain they have caused.

Pain is cyclical. The pain these prisoners have inflicted is tied to the pain they have suffered, most from infancy. If it were it not for grace—forgiveness, and the love of God—many of them would end their own lives during this time. Some do.

.....
"I had to shoot him, or he would have shot me, and I suppose my family, too." (woman, 22, convicted of first-degree murder)
.....

ROOTS OF VIOLENCE

In his profound book *Violence*, James Gilligan, M.D., explores the roots of violence. He believes that people commit acts of violence to get justice or revenge on behalf of someone they know or for themselves. Usually, he writes, they are punishing their victim because they believe that this

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"I didn't mean to kill my baby, but she was crying and crying, and I had to shut her up to get some peace." (woman serving 50 years for murder)
.....

person unjustly punished them. Giligan reveals the irony: The motive for the violence is the same that produces the punishment—justice.

One of my clients, Charlene, grew up in the brothel and drug house that her grandmother and drug-addicted mother ran. When Charlene was 11, her mother made her confess to a murder committed by an older cousin. In that family, children under 12 were made to admit to serious crimes committed by relatives over 12. The sentence for a child under 12 was five years; older offenders might be sentenced to 30 to 40 years.

Charlene was sentenced to a Utah facility for young offenders. She was evaluated initially as mentally slow and depressed. However, when she was placed in a cottage with other children and house parents, she flourished. Her house parents made her go to school, eat healthy foods, and go to bed at a consistent time. When she got sick, she was cared for. She belonged to a support group, and she saw a therapist regularly.

Within two years Charlene was at the head of her class. She became a leader in the school. The staff developed such confidence in her that they permitted her to get an off-campus job. The institutional care Charlene received

helped her thrive in ways no one could have predicted. Imagine how well Charlene could have done if someone had loved her more.

Because of her drug addiction, Charlene's mother visited her only twice in four years, though the state would have paid for eight visits. Still, when Charlene finished her time at the Utah facility, she was sent back to mother in Chicago. No one was there to meet Charlene at the airport. Her parole officer thought that her mother would pick her up, but her mother forgot. Charlene didn't know how to get from the airport to her old neighborhood; her mother had moved; and the brothel had burned to the ground. She eventually found a childhood friend selling drugs on the street, and the friend allowed Charlene to stay with her. Soon, Charlene was selling drugs, too. Within two years, she had two babies and had committed the murder that brought her to my attention. She was a candidate for the death penalty because her rap sheet showed two murders.

What does Charlene's story have to do with peace? If the world in which Charlene and others like her live were more just, there would be drug treatment for her mother and a decent job for her grandmother. If citizens

demand that the police, public defenders, and prosecutors be fully staffed and better supervised, Charlene would never have been convicted of a murder she didn't commit. If citizens demanded better schools for all, Charlene and other poor children in poor neighborhoods might learn better ways to deal with frustration. If everyone did her part to make the world a better place, maybe peace could prevail.

.....
All I wanted was a normal family—a husband, some kids to raise up healthy and happy—but those drugs got hold of me . . . and I killed him. (woman, 20, sentenced to 40 years for murder)
.....

LEARNING PEACE

My father was a pacifist. He said he did not believe in solving problems through killing people, so he refused to serve in the military in World War II. My mother made us memorize hymns because she said we would stand up for our beliefs, and knowing the words to hymns would help maintain our good judgment if we were jailed for protesting. My parents encouraged the five of us to work for justice and taught us that when challenges came we could do the right thing.

My husband and I followed in our parents' footsteps and

tried to raise nonviolent and just children. We allowed no toy weapons. We taught peaceful games and encouraged creativity and cooperation instead of competition. We were children of the '60s, and idealism pervaded our lives.

I imagine all the work we put into peaceful play helped form our children into nonviolent people. In addition, however, it made them oddballs to some classmates. Children raised to love peace also need to learn how to stand up for their convictions. A family that practices peace and peacefully challenges a culture of violence is a powerful model for children and lends them courage and joy in their struggles.

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I don't know what came over me, but when I had the chance, it felt like I was paying back every man who ever hurt me, and I killed him. (woman, 42, convicted of murder, serving 60 years)
.....

PRACTICING PEACE

Another of my clients, Karl, desperately wanted to kill himself, but he didn't have the means. As we prayed and studied Scripture together, looking for God's plan for his life, he came to a place in his faith journey where he could help his cellmate with his crises of faith. Karl taught this man how he

practiced his faith: daily prayer, daily Bible study, and kindness to others. In teaching his friend these things, Karl learned them better himself. Through practicing his faith and with the help of the Holy Spirit, he discerned a path to a future in prison that he could live with. He no longer wanted to commit suicide. Peace was restored to his heart and even began to spread throughout his cellblock.

I pray for a sign of grace in my clients. I pray they come to a future that includes finding things inside themselves that they can generously give to those around them. Being a patient listener, a good counselor, a letter writer—these are examples of gifts that make the life of the giver worth living. People who visit prisoners can help them discover these signs of hope and grace. Sharing their gifts helps inmates form a culture of peace within prison walls.

I don't think we can have a culture of peace without practicing such peaceful ways to live together. Like practicing our faith, we must work at the practice of peace.

We must work for justice if we want peace. That is the truth underlying all genuine peace. Justice includes providing the necessities of life to all people—food, water, shelter, and a little love and grace. People need these basics in order to

grow and to use their God-given gifts in ways that bring joy and satisfaction to themselves and others. Denied life's necessities, people will fight for what they need.

If, as Gilligan says in his book, violence is an attempt to get justice, then our job as peacemakers is to attend to injustices in our world. Open your heart to those who are oppressed among you. Visit a prison, work among the poor, volunteer with children, write your congressman when you see that changes are needed, form a prayer circle. We all have gifts of peace that we can share to help bring healing to God's creation.

.....
Great and merciful God, give to your people the peace that passes all understanding, and the will to live your gospel of mercy and justice.
.....

Ingrid Christiansen worked as a professor of urban studies in Chicago for 30 years and now serves as a sentencing advocate for people facing the death penalty. She and her husband, John Kretzmann, are members of Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Chicago. This article was provided by *Lutheran Woman Today*, the magazine of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Session 2

Boldness in My Community

by Sarah S. Henrich



The Story of Abigail, Nabal, and David

1 Samuel 25:2–42

Please read 1 Samuel 25:2–8. The beginning of this story might lead us to think that the main character will be a man: “There was a man in Maon” suggests that what follows will be about a rich, powerful man with vast properties. But the storyteller has a surprise in store: This man’s name is Nabal, which means *fool* in Hebrew. Nabal is foolish, and worse, he is surly and mean (25:3). The story is really about his “clever and beautiful” wife, Abigail, whose boldness, confidence, and ability to make quick decisions and act on them will save all of Nabal’s holdings—all, that is, except Nabal himself.

As we get into the story of Abigail and Nabal, keep in mind that the story centers on two very important themes for life in biblical times (and still today). The first theme is *hospitality*, which creates social bonds. The second theme, which will show up a little later in the story, is *God’s covenant*, which continues to function and abide among God’s people. Both these themes are about life in community. Hospitality has to do with the ways human beings interact and make community possible. God’s covenant has to do with God’s hospitality toward us; it is the basis for community life in every age. How does boldness connect to these themes? Let’s look further.

A Plea for Food

The story begins as Nabal’s entire household is busy with a huge communal sheep-shearing project, like a cattle roundup or barn raising. Everyone is involved. The shearing is taking place near where David and his men are still hiding in the wilderness, and the relationship between David’s band and Nabal’s shepherds has been good: David’s men had protected Nabal’s men and had treated them with respect and fairness. In this time and place, a massive sheep shearing (over 3,000 sheep) would be a time for both hard work and hard play, with feasting and food aplenty. When David hears about the shearing, he sends some men to ask Nabal, very politely, to share some of that plentiful food with David’s hungry men.

A Dangerous Response

Please read 1 Samuel 25:9–13. Nabal, true to his name (fool), responds to the request with insults. David, in an angry face-saving move, arms his men to go after Nabal; he is, perhaps, as foolish as Nabal. Luckily, one of Nabal’s servants goes to Nabal’s wife, Abigail, and warns her that Nabal’s stingy, rude response to David and his men will cause trouble.

Within his community—his large household or clan—Nabal is like a king. There are expectations for the powerful: It is a sacred duty for a king or head of household to offer hospitality, not insults, to others who ask for food or a place to rest. Nabal

fails in that elemental duty. Even worse, there is a more binding debt that Nabal owes David: David's men had helped guard Nabal's sheep and shepherds. Nabal owes them; it is his turn to give back to David's men. Nabal's refusal breaks all the rules of hospitality and obligation.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Nabal has the power of his wealth and his men. He boldly exercises this power to disregard the obligations of hospitality and mutual help.

1. Describe how this kind of boldness—really arrogance—is not helpful, how it is destructive.
2. Boldness is not inherently a good thing. It can serve God's people and purposes, or it can be self-serving. Can you think of some examples in your local community or in the world community?

Abigail Acts to Save

Please read 1 Samuel 25:14–31. Abigail does not hesitate when one of Nabal's men tells her what is going on. Without speaking to Nabal, she rushes to gather food and load it on donkeys. She sneaks away; after all, she is going against her husband's wishes, and wives in that time and place were expected to be obedient to their husbands. But Abigail is obedient to God and follows her own God-given sense of hospitality and justice.

When she meets the angry David, she does three wise things. First, she apologizes for her husband's foolishness. Second, she reminds David of his own calling from God, a calling that does not allow for revenge and blood-stained hands. Abigail speaks so sensibly and directly to David

that she helps him see the big picture, not simply Nabal's insult and his own anger. David learns an important lesson in self-restraint that he will continue to need when he rules in Israel. (We know from later episodes in David's life that his habit of acting on impulse continued to get him into trouble.) Finally, Abigail wisely asks David to remember her. It will not go easily for her when she goes back to her husband; she had defied him in public.

David's response also has three parts: He blesses, or thanks, God for sending Abigail to him to prevent him from taking on blood guilt for vengeance; he blesses Abigail's good sense and decisive action; and finally, he blesses, or thanks, Abigail herself for her wise words.

Abigail's Honesty

Please read 1 Samuel 25:36–42. This is not the end of the story. Abigail goes home and waits until Nabal is sober to tell him what she has done. Abigail wins the prize for honesty, and she gets a surprise too: Nabal's heart stops when he hears what Abigail has done. Her behavior is so shocking, so unheard-of, that Nabal simply dies, "struck by the Lord." David later marries Abigail, and she feels safe and protected. We might imagine that David feels the same way with such a bold woman of wisdom as his wife.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Do you understand some of your bold actions as a response to God's call in your life?
2. What kinds of courage and confidence do these actions demand of you or inspire in you?

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

David's response is thoughtful and generous. He respects Abigail's actions on behalf of her household and God's people.

1. Have you ever spoken up in a situation and felt really heard? What effect did being heard have on you?
2. What connection do you see between self-respect and the respect given to us by others?
3. How might respectful listening help people become confident or bold?

What We Can Learn

This story is rich with ideas and images. We know that in some ways this story is still lived out by many women and children, and some men, in our world today. Some of the questions raised by the story of Abigail and Nabal and David are hard to answer. Questions about relationships, women, power, and violence come up that give us much to ponder.

It takes a second look to see how Abigail saves David *for* God's covenant work. God chose David to be king while he was still a boy tending his father's sheep. Through the long years of waiting, God supports David, and David is an obedient servant of God. But had he acted on his anger, he would have taken on blood guilt and probably would have forfeited his anointed role as God's leader. Abigail reminds him of his larger purpose in life. She is like an angel from God, a messenger who tells the truth about the consequences of choices.

So in a dangerous situation, in which either of the two powerful men might well take her life, Abigail speaks openly and boldly to David. The differ-

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Abigail is a tough, smart woman in a man's world.

1. What kinds of thoughts might have run through her mind as she was making her decision about what to do?
2. Abigail's confidence in the faithfulness and justice of God gave her courage to speak boldly to David. What gives you courage?
3. What holds you back from stating the truth as you see it?
4. Can you think of ways that communities can support those who dare to speak the truth?
5. What are some of the dangers and benefits of being bold for the sake of God's beloved creation?

ence between David and Nabal could not be clearer. David understands that Abigail is calling him to stronger, more powerful actions than mere brute revenge; he is utterly grateful for her interference. But Nabal's heart turns to stone, and he dies.

Abigail seems to know something my mother used to tell me. I was the oldest of four children. When fights broke out among us, our mother would often (it seemed to me) single me out to stop the fight. "It's not fair," I would whine, and I would list all the grievances I had against my sister or brother. And she would say, "It takes a bigger person to end a fight than to keep it going." That's what David hears from Abigail. And it's true!

Sarah S. Henrich is associate professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. She has written and led many Bible studies for a wide variety of groups throughout the Lutheran church.

Session 2: Boldness in My Community

The Story of Abigail, Nabal, and David

by Sarah S. Henrich

Materials and preparation

For the closing of this session, you will need copies of *Lutheran Book of Worship*, *This Far by Faith*, or another hymnal.

Overview

This study focuses on one chapter in the long saga of David's journey from shepherd boy to king of Israel. God's covenant promise is protected and David's calling is preserved by the bold action of one woman, Abigail. Abigail broke one set of rules (her husband's) in order to follow more important rules (justice and hospitality). Her boldness in doing the will of God saved her household and David.

Our Bible story begins in the usual way. We are introduced to a man who we suppose is the main character, but a Hebrew reader would quickly recognize the clue in his name, Nabal, the fool. This name lets us know that this story will be unusual and ironic. Now that we know this, we can read the story with eyes wide open to twists and surprises.

Read the Bible story together in the segments suggested. As you move into the story, you may want to list the characters on a chalkboard or easel. It quickly becomes clear that this story involves a large household. Abigail and Nabal were responsible for their extended family and all those who work for them. When Nabal denied David's

request for food, he endangered a large group of people.

Abigail went counter to her husband's wishes, a dangerous thing to do in that society, when she followed the rules of hospitality and obligation in order to preserve her family. Her bold action was not only for her own protection!

Another unusual note in this story is that Nabal's young man turned quickly to Abigail for help (vv. 14–17). He was well aware that Nabal's authority was compromised by his foolishness. He turned to Abigail as the real source of wisdom. These few verses may give participants a chance to consider how often there is an unofficial figure of power, authority, and decision-making. Women have often been in this position, just as Abigail was, because laws or customs or both have allowed them to exercise authority only in a hidden or secondhand way. How does this kind of position connect with boldness?

It is important for participants to know that David's anger would not have surprised ancient readers. Mediterranean societies ran on the principles of honor and obligation. Because David and his men had done a favor to Nabal by protecting his shepherds, Nabal owed David a favor. His refusal to honor his obligation deprived David and his men of food, but even more importantly,

Nabal dishonored David and made David look bad. Nabal's action challenged David to respond.

Yet, as Abigail pointed out, for David to slaughter Nabal's innocent men would bring their blood on David, and a feud would have begun, keeping David from his true calling to rule Israel. The ancient storyteller counts on the readers to know all these things. These readers would also know that David is in an impossible place: He, as future king of Israel, could not show himself as weak and ridiculous to his own men; yet he did not want a blood feud.

Abigail's decisive disobedience to her husband saved the day for David. He was able to save face; after all, he received that for which he asked, plus an apology from the wise Abigail. He saved his men and himself from terrible consequences. Abigail's choice had effects far beyond her household; it changed the history of her people.

Her decisiveness stemmed from her confident affirmation of the ways of God and her trust in the God who had called David to lead the people. God rewarded the boldness with which she defied her foolish husband in two ways: First, Nabal died without harming her, and second, David took her as his own wife.

In several sections of the Bible study, there is a box called "Questions to Ponder." Leaders should read through these questions before the study session and choose two or three questions that you think will be valuable for discussion in your group. There are many ways to approach these questions. Please see the Session 1 Leader Guide (June issue) for some suggestions, but always let the needs and style of your group be your guide. Be bold in using your own creativity as well. It may be that you want to plan your study session in cooperation with another person or two. Sharing ideas for getting conversations going and bringing them to good conclusions is an asset.

Closing

For the closing, you might sing a hymn (see suggestions in the June issue Leader Guide); read again Ephesians 6:18-20 and pray the Lord's Prayer.

Sarah S. Henrich is associate professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. She has written and led many Bible studies for a wide variety of groups throughout the Lutheran church.

Christianity without Fairy Tales When Science and Religion Merge

by Jim Rigas

Were all of Jesus' disciples men as the New Testament tells us? Was Eve really deceived by Satan causing the downfall of the entire human race as the Old Testament maintains? Who were the "Christ's Brides" of the first four centuries AD? In a provocative, well documented, yet highly readable book, a scientist looks at our Christian heritage from the Creation Stories to the Nicene Creed separating truth from myth - Presents facts, asks questions, suggests further readings. A perfect book for Bible study groups, or enjoy it by yourself. More details at <www.jimrigas.com> or word-search through it at <www.amazon.com>. Soft cover, 490 pages, \$22.50 - Order today. For 10% off and immediate free shipment call Pathway Book Service at (800) 345-6665.



Readers Write

REMINDER OF GRACE

I truly liked Pastor Karen Minnich-Sadler's article, "Easter Leap of Grace," in the March issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*. It says that we move and live and have our being in Jesus; we are covered by the grace of God; and we are children of God, children of grace; and nothing else in our lives is more important than that foundation of truth. This is a wonderful reminder of grace. Thank you.

—Jane Stone, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, Ark.

WEST BIBLE STUDY ONE OF THE BEST

We want to commend you on this year's Bible study, "Everyday Surprises: The Parables of Jesus," by Audrey West. It was very well written. It was interesting, easy to understand, and thought-provoking. Each lesson could be covered in an hour or two since we were studying just a certain story or portion of Scripture. The theme or message of each study was very clear and the author helped us to relate the parables to our lives today. It also provided the opportunity for deeper study either as a group or on our own. Overall, it was one of the best Bible studies we have had.

—Grace Women of the ELCA, Grace Lutheran Church, Grygla, Minn.

WE MAKE QUILTS, TOO

Thank you for the article on women quilters, "The Gospel with Work Gloves On," in the March 2005 issue. We are a group of eight women, ages 65 to 85,

who do quilting also for Lutheran World Relief. We make 100 a year for mission.

We also make one for each of our high school graduates and one for anyone moving into our neighborhood, as well as for local people who have fires in their homes. We donate 30 a year to the Northlands mission for the homeless. We are a very small rural church in northern Minnesota.

—Margaret Brawley, United Lutheran Church, Gatzke, Minn.

A COLUMN THAT WARMS

Month after month, when *LWT* arrives, I turn first to Marj Leegard's column. I know I will find a smile, a tear, a phrase to remember, but always, always, the gift of an insightful, thought-provoking column. Marj spoke at our Women of the ELCA prayer breakfast a number of years ago in a small northern Minnesota town, and she was a delightful speaker. Reading her column is like meeting an old friend. My heartfelt thanks to Marj and to *LWT* for bringing her warmth and wisdom to us.

—Elaine Anderson, via e-mail

A GREAT ISSUE, COVER TO COVER

Kudos on the March issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*. It was outstanding—from the grocery carts on the cover to the final "Amen!" I especially enjoyed "Give Us This Day" by Marj Leegard. She perfectly voiced my feelings about this difficult month.

—Sally Steinmiller, Walworth, N.Y.



BIBLE STUDY AND LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY OVERVIEW

| September 2005–August 2006 |

Act Boldly in the Fruit of the Spirit is the nine-month Bible study based on Galatians 5:22–23, Paul’s exhortation to live by the Spirit, not the desires of the flesh. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,” Paul writes in Galatians. The study will show us how, as Christians, we can act boldly through our unique God-given gifts. Throughout the study, the author, the Rev. Sue Gamelin, uses two biblical Greek words to define different types of boldness: *talmao*, acting despite our fear, and *parrhesia*, acting out of our passion. A sample session is available for preview on-line at www.lutheranwomantoday.org.

For the next 12 months, *LWT* also will provide readers with two special features—a focus on health and an opportunity to pray for our global

peacemakers. Read more about the global peace-making project on page 40.

ABOUT THE BIBLE STUDY AUTHOR

The Rev. Sue Gamelin and her husband, Tim, are pastors of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in High Point, North Carolina. She is an award-winning writer and gifted storyteller whose writings have appeared frequently in the pages of *Lutheran Woman Today*. Before accepting the call to Emmanuel, Gamelin was assistant to the bishop/pastor for leadership in the ELCA South-eastern Synod from 1995 to 2003. A graduate of Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, in 1965, Gamelin earned her master of divinity degree in 1980 from Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Gamelin may be available to introduce the Bible study to your group or larger SWO convention. If you are interested in hosting an event with her, contact Women of the ELCA communication specialist Ceciley Boykin by e-mail (Ceciley.Boykin@elca.org) or phone (800-638-3522, ext. 2744). Locations and dates are based on requests and availability. As Gamelin's schedule fills, her speaking engagement dates and locations will be posted on the *Lutheran Woman Today* Web site.

SEPTEMBER 2005

Act Boldly with Love

The most important commandment of the New Testament is "Love your neighbor as yourself." This issue will explore biblical and modern-day examples of acting boldly in love. It will also highlight the International Day of Peace on September 21 and suggest ways you can observe that day.

Praying for Peacemakers Women serving as chaplains in Moscow reach out to refugee Africans in Russia.

Focus on Health Is sexism harming your health? Do women receive the same treatment as men when it comes to heart disease?

OCTOBER 2005

Act Boldly with Joy

It's always easier to let someone else do the hard work. How are we called to act boldly despite our fears? Often we fail to follow our hearts because that is the more difficult path. How do we realize our true passions and act on them boldly?

Praying for Peacemakers The tsunami in December 2004 killed many women and children

and subjected the survivors to new perils. How is the church responding?

Focus on Health Go pink: New advances in the battle against breast cancer.

NOVEMBER 2005

Act Boldly in Peace

Many stories in the Bible tell of women who acted boldly against their leaders in favor of God's commandments. Think about how Rahab felt when she hid the two spies from her king. We have similar stories today of brave, peaceful women acting outside their comfort zones.

Praying for Peacemakers Have you ever heard of Mauritania in northern Africa? Women's rights are in short supply there, but the women still work for peace.

Focus on Health Rising obesity and heart disease mean a record number of women are developing diabetes.

DECEMBER 2005

Act Boldly with Patience

What is bold patience? Is it actively pursuing a goal while also waiting calmly for God's answers? What if God's answer is no? Hannah begged God for a child, and she received a favorable response. A 66-year-old Romanian woman gave birth in 2005. How do we handle God's yes? How do we deal with God's no?

Praying for Peacemakers Tension often brews between Muslims and Christians, but in western Africa, missionaries take peaceful actions to mend fences.

Focus on Health Little miracles: Jesus wasn't the first baby to be born with help from beyond.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

Act Boldly with Kindness

Have you ever given “the shirt off your back” to a stranger? That is what God calls us to do. The widow of Zarephath only had enough meal and oil to feed her son and herself, yet she gave her last cake to Elijah. Her gift was motivated by kindness, not hope of reward. When we offer kindness to strangers, we are truly acting as Christ commanded.

Act Boldly with Generosity

When we are generous to others, is it a response to God’s generosity to us? And if God seems more generous to others, does that make us envious? Lydia was rich and generous. She wore beautiful purple clothes and lived in a mansion. Would we be more giving if we owned what Lydia owned? We are called to be charitable and kind whether we are rich or poor.

Praying for Peacemakers How does the principal of a Palestinian school in Jerusalem keep the peace?

Focus on Health New year, new you. Resolutions are good for the soul (and the body).

MARCH 2006

Act Boldly in Faithfulness

When two people exchange vows, they trust their lives will grow richer over time. When you have a friend who remains faithful to you in a time of crisis, you are comforted. These are examples of bold faithfulness, evident in biblical times with stories like Ruth and Naomi’s and evident today. What’s your personal story of bold faithfulness?

Praying for Peacemakers In the Mekong region of Asia, women learn how to deal with the aftereffects

of war. They are becoming community leaders and peacemakers.

Focus on Health Smile for good health! If you think flossing is a waste of time, think again.

APRIL 2006

Act Boldly with Gentleness

Compelling stories about humble and gentle people are difficult to find because they often don’t enjoy basking in the limelight. We do, however, have a few biblical examples of humble, gentle, bold people. We could start with Jesus. Gentleness calms us and others; it inspires and ensures; it enriches and enables.

Praying for Peacemakers Migrant workers in Ethiopia and the Philippines brave untold brutality, yet react in peace.

Focus on Health Fighting back after sexual assault: One in three women will be raped, increasing their risk of suicide.

MAY 2006

Act Boldly with Self-Control

In this last session of the nine-month Bible study, the final fruit in our deluxe gift basket from God might present the biggest challenge: How do we act boldly, yet with self-control? Boldness tempered with self-control might call for such acts as embracing fair trade coffee campaigns and speaking up against social, cultural, and racial injustices. This fruit allows us to direct our energy wisely, and it can assist us in acting boldly in all the other ways mentioned in the previous eight studies.

Praying for Peacemakers The injustices suffered in Sudan are still coming to light. Discover how Lutherans are helping.

Focus on Health Get your zzzzs! Studies show that 26 percent of U.S. women have trouble sleeping. What are the risks of tossing and turning?

JUNE AND JULY/AUGUST 2006 OVERVIEW

In these two summer issues, *Lutheran Woman Today* will explore how women can act boldly by taking care of their own health and well-being and by reaching out to others. A healthful and more peaceful world starts within us, but we are called to make a difference beyond our boundaries.

JUNE 2006

Praying for Peacemakers A Brazilian Lutheran woman missionary was murdered in Mozambique.

BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES FOR

Act Boldly in the Fruit of the Spirit

The only piece essential for participating in the *Act Boldly in the Fruit of the Spirit* study is a subscription to *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine; however, the following companion pieces add depth and meaning to the study. Call 800-328-4648 to order.

LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide provides the Bible study leader with additional background information not found in *Lutheran Woman Today* and makes the experience of leading the group easier and more enjoyable. Included in this resource are guides to the session questions, tips on how to lead the discussion, instructions for activities, ideas for prayers, and more.

COMPANION BIBLE

This handy volume puts the study texts in one convenient place. Printed in an easy-to-read size, it offers biblical cross-references for every study. It

She left a legacy and a to-do list.

Focus on Health Ah-choo! Summer's coming. Are you one of the 50 million Americans with allergies?

JULY/AUGUST 2006

Praying for Peacemakers In Chile, a brave woman stole out into the night to bury the bodies of murdered countrymen as she worked for peace during years of oppression.

Focus on Health The truth about hormone replacement therapy. What's up? Cancer? Heart attacks? Strokes? Blood clots? We'll sort through the latest research.

also provides participants with space to jot notes, underline, or highlight.

BOOKMARK

The *Act Boldly in the Fruit of the Spirit* bookmark makes a terrific gift for prospective Bible study participants or group members. It is sold in packs of 12.

Call 800-328-4648 to order

Lutheran Woman Today Subscription

1 year/10 issues \$12

2 years/20 issues \$22

3 years/30 issues \$33

Order on-line at www.augsburgfortress.org. Go to Stores, Lutheran resources, *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine for on-line order form.

Bible Study Companion Pieces Information

Leader Guide: 6-0002-0445-0 Price \$6.95

Companion Bible: 6-0002-0444-2 Price \$3.95

Bookmark (12 pack): 6-0002-0443-4 Price \$3.75

PRAYING FOR PEACEMAKERS

Sisters Fighting Violence

by Anne Basye

"Now what?" That's what the members of Women in Peacebuilding Network Liberia asked themselves when Liberian combatants finally laid down their weapons and signed a peace accord.

WIPNET's daily sit-ins and courageous witness to government and rebel leaders had paved the way for the peace accord. But now the ink on the peace agreement had dried. "Do we go back to cooking and baking and being mothers again?" the women asked themselves.

Recognizing that peace is more than a treaty, they decided to continue their activism. Under the slogan "Peace yes, war never again," they began to train women in the contents of the peace agreement so that they could actively monitor its implementation, document any violations, and intervene with actions of peace and reconciliation.

The women of Liberia tend to peace as we tend to a job, a family, or a garden. The actions they take daily to create and sustain peace in their country are repeated all around the world and are a hopeful sign.

We have just emerged from one of the most violent centuries in the history of humanity. But in the midst of its turmoil, more nonviolent, peacemaking activities took place than ever before. Tens of thousands of people learned conflict resolution skills, monitored elections, and held leaders accountable. And many undertook the difficult task of forgiving former enemies and welcoming them back into community.

WOMEN LEADING THE WAY TO PEACE

It's no surprise that most of the people working to create peace on the ground are women. In some ways, we are ideally suited for peacemaking. We care. We listen. We're practical. We know how to compromise *and* apologize. All these qualities help us prevent conflict or take the steps necessary to move from conflict toward reconciliation.

But because our strengths arise out of our traditional roles, they can be marginalized. "When work for reconciliation and reconstruction is seen as a 'natural' extension of women's role in society, it is taken for granted," says Shelley Anderson, coordinator of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation's Women Peacemakers Program. "This means the work goes unrecognized. It is stripped of its political meaning and rendered, like much of women's work, invisible."

It's true, isn't it? For many, the word *peacemaker* means *diplomat*, which calls up the picture of a dignified, middle-aged man in a well-tailored suit, striding purposefully off to negotiate a treaty. People think of peace as something brokered by important men, not created on the ground by women like us.

And yet, peacemaking *is* grassroots work. Because most conflicts are local, most peacemaking is local. And most peacemakers are women very similar to us.

One way we can help create a culture of peace and nonviolence is by supporting our peacemaking

sisters. By recognizing their work, we can bring them out of obscurity and make them visible. By lifting up their efforts in our prayers, we can strengthen one another for mutual ministry.

We've already done that for Liberia's peacemaking women. Leymah Gbowee, one of the group's cofounders, has been profiled twice in *Lutheran Woman Today* and invited to speak at the annual Global Mission Events and the Women of the ELCA's Sixth Triennial Gathering this year. Our recognition of Leymah's leadership has affirmed the role of women in the Lutheran Church in Liberia and strengthened Liberian women in their struggle for a place at the table.

PRAYING FOR WOMEN PEACEMAKERS

Now, we can do the same for women all around the world. Beginning in September and continuing through July/August 2006, each issue of *Lutheran Woman Today* will lift up a different woman peacemaker. You'll learn about her community and its conflicts. You'll hear how she and her sisters are fighting violence in its familiar guises—in families,

schools, and cities; between countries; and between racial, ethnic, or religious groups—as well as in less visible forms like racism, classism, and environmental degradation. You'll hear her story of creating peace as school principals, pastors, organizers, mothers, and citizens.

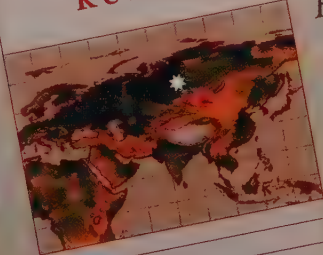
You'll also be invited to pray for her country using the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle. Designed by the World Council of Churches, the Cycle asks Christians to pray for different countries each week. Over the course of a year, every country in the world is lifted up in prayer. As this discipline unites us with our sisters, it will help realize Jesus' prayer that we might all be one.

Remember the old refrain, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me"? On this journey with our sisters, let us seek and discover the significant steps we can take to heal and transform our broken, discordant world. And let peace begin!

Anne Basye is associate director for Global Resources, ELCA Division for Global Mission, and a member of Unity Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill.

Experience life through the eyes of women who face the threat of war every day. A yearlong look at peacemakers around the world begins in the September 2005 issue.

RUSSIA



GEOGRAPHY

Russia is located in Northern Asia, bordering the Arctic Ocean between Europe and the North Pacific. Russia is almost twice the size of the US, with a climate that ranges from sub arctic to warm. Natural resources include major deposits of oil, natural gas, coal, timber, and strategic minerals.

ONE SHARED MEAL:

Peace-building in Russia



ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL PEACE-BUILDING TOOLS EVER is employed daily at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy (MPC) in Russia: a delicious, hot meal. Every day, its soup kitchen program feeds 600 people—elderly Russians with inadequate pensions, MPC members from African countries, and anyone who walks in the door.

"The meals are miraculous because they pull us all into one shared meal—creating a space of relationship between Africans and Russians, men and women, young and old, East and West," says Sara Olson, a senior at the Lutheran School of Theology Chicago who served as an intern at the Chaplaincy in 2004-2005. "There is an amazing sense of life and human care that is not always present in our lives here."

MPC's table welcomes immigrants, refugees, and students for whom life in Moscow is lonely and dangerous. People in Russia's closed, inward-looking society can be suspicious of foreigners. Skinheads—young men who shave their heads and dress in combat gear—take it a step further, and express their hatred through attacks. Typically, a group of 10 to 30 teenagers will stake out a table and kick or bottle and blunt objects.

Session 3

Boldness in My World

by Sarah S. Henrich



The Stories of Naaman's Slave Girl and Apollos

The Bible is full of stories of God's people being called to act with confident boldness in an unfriendly world. The big names and memorable events are inspirational: Think of Moses standing before Pharaoh demanding the release of God's people or Joshua marching his small group of stalwart men around the walls of Jericho. Consider the bravery of Rahab, the prostitute who helps Joshua's spies in order to secure protection for her family. What about Mary, the mother of Jesus? Or Joseph, who is bold enough to trust the dreams sent by God? And surely when we think of boldness, we remember Paul, who dares to change his mind and heart and trust the call of Jesus. These and many others form a cloud of witnesses to our faith that God empowers us with the Holy Spirit to do more than we could ever believe possible.

In this session we will meet some lesser-known members of God's family who were called to bold actions beyond their own communities. Their stories may help us imagine more boldly how God works in our own lives. As we meet these people from far-away places and ancient times, we will see how trust in God can lead anyone in any circumstance in life to reach out to others with confidence and hope.

The Story of Naaman's Slave Girl

2 Kings 5:1-19

Please read 2 Kings 5:1-5. This story is often

described as the story of Naaman. He is the lead character, after all, and we hear in the first verse that he is commander of the army of the king of Aram. He is a great man, in high favor with his king. Yet Naaman has leprosy. Here is a man who has everything except his health. On the other end of the spectrum stands our *real* main character: a young girl taken captive and made a slave to Naaman's wife. In her situation, survival depends on silent obedience and keeping her head down. She is far from home and family, legally unprotected, and not even named in this story. However, this girl does not keep her head down in frightened obedience. She offers a word of hope to her mistress, Naaman's wife: "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy" (v. 3).

Can we even understand the great risk she takes in speaking up this way? In full assurance that the God of Israel can heal (and even *will* heal a foreigner), and in full confidence that God works through the prophet, she boldly offers her suggestion. What if it doesn't work out? What if Naaman or Mrs. Naaman are insulted by the idea of going to see a prophet of Israel? Worse, what if they feel it an insult to their own god?

This brave girl goes out on a very thin and fragile limb. She speaks a word of hope and confidence into the ear of a powerful woman and then a highly placed man, confident in a power greater

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. The slave girl in this story would have been almost invisible in her time and place. Who is invisible in our time and place?
2. How do we make opportunities to listen to people who are different from us?
3. If God turns to those who seem invisible to carry God's word, where might we turn to hear that word in our day?
4. Like Naaman, have you ever been surprised to find God present in a place you didn't expect?
5. Do you think Naaman's healing is connected to his willingness to trust the words of people who were unknown or unimportant to him (his wife's slave girl, the prophet, his own slaves)? What leads you to think the way you do?

than any earthly kingdom. She has confidence in God's will for the well-being of all human beings. Even though her own circumstance, slavery in a foreign land, might argue against the power of her God to save, she is still bold in her faith.

Please read 2 Kings 5:6–19. Naaman, instead of letting his illness control his fate, takes the slave girl's suggestion and puts his destiny in God's hands. The mighty man takes an entourage with him and goes to the prophet. "What can he be thinking?" people must have wondered. As the story unfolds, we learn that Naaman almost throws away his opportunity: When he is not treated with the respect he thinks he deserves, he does not trust

the cure that the prophet Elisha prescribes. Finally, his own servants intervene with a quiet word, and Naaman listens to them. He is freed from his leprosy and becomes a worshiper of the God of Israel.

As we have seen in this story of the young girl and the mighty general, boldness does not have to be loud or in your face. It does not require a pulpit or a podium with a microphone. Sometimes bold speech is like a pebble thrown in a pond, making ripples that spread out in ways that are hard to predict. In our second story we will see how a young man acts boldly in his time and place, thousands of years later, and causes ripples that come down to our own time.

The Story of Apollos

Acts 18:24–28 (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:1–9, 21–23)

Please read Acts 18:24–28. Apollos looks like one of those eager students who is impatient to jump in and save the world before he is quite ready. Indeed, it can be one of God's great gifts that some of us sometimes rush in to share our excitement, even when it is a little raw. Recall how careful the slave girl is in the story from 2 Kings. Conversely, that's how impetuous Apollos is in this story from Acts.

We meet this Jew from Alexandria in the city of Ephesus—another one of God's family far from home, away from his own people. What is he doing there? Both Ephesus and Alexandria are large cities, renowned for learning and sophistication. Apollos has moved in learned circles all his life and is described in verse 24 as eloquent, an ancient way of describing a well-educated man. He knows his Bible and is at home in both the Jewish (minority) and Greco-Roman (majority) cultures. When he hears about Jesus, he gets it!

His excitement is intense, and he speaks openly about Jesus in the synagogue.

Here is a man bold enough to change his mind, to expand his faith, to move beyond what he already knew. This kind of boldness is often the most difficult. How often are we able to take what we know and push past it to new vistas of understanding? How often can we move from our deep roots, as Apollos does, and see new understandings and beliefs flower from those same roots? It takes great personal boldness.

Apollos does not stop there, satisfied to have achieved a great insight that reshapes his life. He goes on to speak publicly and openly of his great belief about Jesus even when it might create difficulty for him. This is daring indeed. But it is not the end of the story for Apollos still has things to learn.

Please re-read Acts 18:25–26. He is taken aside by Priscilla and Aquila, two devout believers who had worked with Paul, traveled with him to Ephesus, and stayed there to nurture the young community of believers. These two teach Apollos the difference between John's baptism and baptism into the name of Jesus. Apollos must come to grips with more changes in his beliefs, even after he has spoken of his beliefs in public. For Priscilla, Aquila, and the other believers, as well as for Apollos himself, the empowerment given by baptism in the name of Jesus must be truly and rightly shared. The source of boldness and confidence in God's presence is the Holy Spirit, given in that baptism of Jesus.

Apollos is willing to learn. Sometimes our greatest boldness and confidence in God is shown by our willingness to learn to see God's presence in the world in new ways. Notice how willing Apollos is to receive

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Apollos is excited and ready to go. It takes courage and confidence for him to slow down and learn more fully how to speak God's good news.

1. When have you had to slow down and learn a little more?
2. Whom did you trust to teach you? How did you feel?
3. For adults, being corrected and changing our mind in public can be embarrassing. Why do we think we need not be learning all the time? What makes us embarrassed about re-thinking our old ways?
4. How is repentance, an accepted and cherished part of Christian life, connected with changing one's mind?
5. Have you ever had to face the fact that you have not been given certain gifts that you wished you had? How did you come to the realization of your own limitations?
6. God has given us gifts for the world. How do you use your gifts?

help from other believers. Priscilla and Aquila help him, as do those who encourage him and recommend him to the disciples in Corinth. Confident enough in his own particular gifts, Apollos is not afraid to learn to use his gifts better and more widely. It requires personal honesty and boldness to accept one's limitations and remain confident in one's gifts.

Conclusion

Our stories in this session have been about people

far from home who cared so deeply about their fellow human beings that their insistence on sharing God's good news for humankind could not be stopped. They spoke out wherever they were to express their confidence in the work of God. We cannot measure the effects over these thousands of years of the public proclamation of one servant girl, one apostle, one eager young man. We cannot fully measure the effects of our own best efforts, whether small or great, to care for our neighbors as God's children. All we can do is receive the gift

of boldness in the Lord, rely on our communities to call out of us what they need, and act on it. This may not be a prescription for an easy life, but it is a call to the great adventure of serving the God we know in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit—one bold step at a time.

Sarah S. Henrich is associate professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. She has written and led many Bible studies for a wide variety of groups throughout the Lutheran church.

Thank you for participating in the *Lutheran Woman Today* summer Bible study.

Now is the time to look ahead to the September 2005–May 2006 study. See page 36 in this issue for more details. We believe it will be another favorite.

This is a great time to confirm that your subscription is up to date or add gift subscriptions to avoid missing any installments in this next study. For \$12, a one-year subscription includes 12 Bible study sessions written exclusively for *LWT* subscribers. In articles that complement the Bible studies, *LWT* seeks to inspire and inform women as they explore their own faith journeys. Call 800-328-4648 for subscription information.



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Session 3: Boldness in My World

The Stories of Naaman's Slave Girl and Apollos

by Sarah S. Henrich

Materials and preparation

For the closing of this session, you will need copies of *Lutheran Book of Worship*, *This Far by Faith*, or another hymnal.

Overview

This session focuses on God-given boldness that sends us out into the world where we seek to serve our neighbors (even our enemies) in whatever role we find ourselves. Participants will have a chance to consider lesser-known people of faith who have shown their boldness in different ways. These people, like pebbles thrown into a pond, make an impact not in a big, showy way, but by beginning a set of ripples that grow wider and wider. In fact, those people, like most of us, probably could not guess what sort or how much of an impact their actions would make. Yet we dare to confess our faith, trusting that God can make use of us.

This session, like Session 2, is divided into sections. Each section includes “Questions to Ponder.” These are not questions with right or wrong answers, and there are more questions than a group can work with in one session. Leaders, please read through these discussion questions before your group gathers and choose two or three for your group’s discussion. There are many ways to approach these questions. Please see the Session 1 Leader Guide in

the June issue of *Lutheran Woman Today* for some suggestions, but as always, let the needs and style of your group be your guide. As suggested in Session 2, you may want to plan your session with a partner or two, in order to share some ideas about how to get conversations going and bring them to good conclusions.

The Story of Naaman's Slave Girl

This story is profound on many levels. It is a story of bold trust in God on the part of a young female captive. It is a story of desperate hope on the part of a powerful, proud man and his wife. It is a story of making the wrong approach, trying to buy with power and authority that which is freely given, the healing help of God. In all these stories within the story, there are elements of boldness.

We have focused on the boldness of the young woman who had no power at all; she was a slave in the household of her captor. She lived in a foreign and hostile culture, and she had clearly been paying attention to what is happening around her. She knew about her master’s illness; she knew about the powers of the prophet back in her homeland; and she knew that she was called by God to love even her enemy. No one would blame this girl for being too fearful or too angry to say anything that might help her captor; we are amazed that she did.

The word of hope was heard and taken out of her hands. It took hope for Naaman, a mighty general, to ask permission to return to an enemy country to seek help. It is easy to imagine his wealthy friends wondering, “Don’t we have good doctors here? Why is he going to see that shaman?” But Naaman was willing to risk that his slave girl might be right. He humbled himself to listen to her.

It requires boldness to speak up when no one expects you to have anything to say. It also takes boldness to listen to someone whom your world considers unimportant and uninformed. God calls us to both kinds of daring—daring to hear those we consider to be of lower status *and* daring to speak generously to those who consider themselves above us.

Of course, as the story goes on, humility became just too much for Naaman, and he was ready to scorn the cure offered for his leprosy. But once again, he dared to listen to a servant’s voice and followed through, eventually to be healed of his leprosy and of his idolatry.

The Story of Apollos

Changing your mind about your own deeply held convictions takes as much boldness as anything—perhaps more. This is the story of a learned young man from the most cultured city in the ancient Mediterranean world. As a Jew, Apollos (who has a Greek name!) was likely to have learned both the religious traditions of his own people and the patterns of thought and speech of the Greek-speaking world around him. By Apollos’ time, there was already a long tradition of thoughtful Jewish writers who tried to make sense of their faith and their scriptures for the surrounding cultures. We still have many of these writings today. We can understand the difficulty of continuing in the faith as the culture changes around us and challenges us.

Apollos had heard of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Convinced that something important had happened through Jesus, he preached in Ephesus, another city of learning and sophistication, about how God was changing the world. Yet somehow, he hadn’t put it all together. Apollos needed a little more time and a little more instruction before he was able to preach truly that Jesus had come as God’s Messiah. This instruction he humbly received. He acknowledged his ignorance and willingly took on the task of more learning.

This is difficult. Who likes to be told that they are not speaking with full understanding? But Apollos cared more for God’s truth than for his own pride. So he revised his preaching and boldly went out to the congregations around the Mediterranean with his renewed message. We cannot guess how many people were shaped by Apollos’ preaching. Surely he was a pebble cast into a pond. We can be shaped by his example: daring to speak, daring to receive correction, and daring to speak again instead of falling into embarrassed silence. Such boldness calls for deep confidence in the God who calls us to serve, forgives our fumbling and limited efforts, and sends us forth again.

Closing

For the closing, you might sing a hymn (see suggestions in the Leader Guide to Session 1, the June issue); again read Ephesians 6:18–20; and pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Sarah S. Henrich is associate professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. She has written and led many Bible studies for a wide variety of groups throughout the Lutheran church.

ACTION & ADVOCACY GUIDE

Peace Is in the Air (page 4)

The only response to violence is peace. The ELCA has joined other denominations and organizations in designating 2001-2010 as the Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence. To find resources and program ideas for peacemaking and nonviolence, go to www.elca.org/nonviolence. Also, the ELCA Web site has resources for talking about peace and war at www.elca.org/peaceandwar/index.html. The Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF) is a community of Lutherans across the United States and around the globe, responding to the gospel call to be peacemakers and justice seekers (www.lutheranpeace.org).

Churches representing more than 560 million Christians worldwide are invited to mark the International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21 by taking 24 hours to pray for peace. Launched by the World Council of Churches, the initiative encourages Christian churches all over the world to arrange for 24-hour observances on that day and to include prayers for peace in their services on the Sunday before or after September 21. More information and prayer resources are available at www.overcomingviolence.org.

About this ecumenical issue: The ELCA has a strong commitment to work together with other churches for the sake of Christ's witness in the world. To learn more about Christian unity, go to www.elca.org/ecumenical. "Your Guide to Ecumenical Life in the ELCA" is a free four-color brochure that you can order by calling 800-638-3522 ext. 2610 or e-mail eainfo@elca.org.

Wisdom of Anger (page 14)

Jean Gray recommended several books about dealing with the emotion of anger and inner peace. These include: *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes (Ballantine Books, 1996)

The Dance of the Dissident Daughter, Sue Monk Kidd (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996)

A God Who Looks like Me, Patricia Lynn Reilly (Ballantine Books, 1996)

The Healing Connection, Jean Baker Miller & Irene Pierce Stiver (Beacon Press, 1998)

The Chalice and the Blade, Riane Eisler (HarperSanFrancisco, 1988)

Acting for Justice (page 18)

The Society of St. Andrew (www.endhunger.org) is an ecumenical Christian ministry dedicated to meeting both spiritual and physical hungers. They feed the hungry all year long by saving fresh produce that would otherwise go to waste and giving it to the needy. The ELCA's commitment to supporting people who live with chronic hunger and poverty is carried out by ELCA World Hunger through relief, development, education, and advocacy. To learn more, go to www.elca.org/hunger.

Bullied to Death (page 20)

For more information on why girls bully, read *Odd Girl Speaks Out: Girls Write about Bullies, Cliques, Popularity, and Jealousy* by Rachel Simmons and *Queen Bees and Wannabes* by Rosalind Wiseman. Also visit the Web sites Bully Online www.bullyonline.org and the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center www.safeyouth.org.

The Voice of Experience (page 22)

In 1995, the ELCA adopted a social statement called "For peace in God's world." Read it at www.elca.org/dcs/peacein.html.

Praying for Peacemakers (page 40)

The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle enables Christians to journey in prayer through every region of the world and through every week of the year affirming solidarity with other Christians all over the world. To learn more, visit www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/01-02.html.



GRACE NOTES

Acting Boldly Is a Lifestyle

by Linda Post Bushkofsky

ACT BOLDLY. THAT'S OUR TRIENNIAL THEME, BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT. IT'S A LIFESTYLE. IT'S HOW WE LIVE our lives in a way that reflects our values and attitudes, and as Christians we are called to be nothing but bold in our actions.

Lutherans aren't called the "frozen chosen" for nothing. Many Lutherans are of the reserved sort so well described by Garrison Keillor. Yet being bold doesn't necessarily mean being loud, pushy, belligerent, or even gregarious. Whatever our temperament or personality, each Lutheran Christian is called through our baptism to act boldly. Our Lutheran theology gives us great freedom to be risk takers.

As Martin Luther told Philip Melancthon in 1521, we are called to be bold, to live in obedience to Christ, to take risks on account of the gospel, and in doing so, we are to believe more boldly still in Christ Jesus. One of my colleagues puts it this way: We are to live boldly and sin boldly. To live is to sin. Each day inevitably brings with it sin. But each day also brings with it a new opportunity to believe firmly in and respond to our baptism.

We've spent the last 36 months listening to God. And if we are honest, we must open ourselves to the creative, ever-surprising actions of the Holy Spirit. However reluctant we might be, when we listen to God, we are likely to hear a call to change our own self-image, to give up whatever passes for safety and familiarity, to live in a way that seems entirely different from our own expectations. We will continue to listen to and for God in the next 36 months and beyond, but now we are ready to act.

So what can it mean to act boldly? We're going to spend at least the next 36 months answering that question, and we can expect a wide variety of answers. This is not meant to be an academic exercise. We truly expect the three million women in the ELCA to act boldly! For some, acting boldly may mean diving into an issue of social justice (for example, advocating for universal health care, working to end commercial sexual exploitation, or seeking to relieve world hunger). For others, acting boldly might mean accepting a missionary assignment or returning to school to follow a call that has long been ignored. For still others, acting boldly may mean enriching one's prayer life or increasing assistance to a local food pantry or teen center. Acting boldly may mean closer contact and service within the circle of family and friends or wider contact and service within the community.

In whatever ways we act boldly, both individually and collectively, we know that we are likely to face risks. To act upon God's dreams for the world will likely put us in conflict with the ideals our culture holds dear. We can survive and even flourish in spite of these risks through the communities of women who surround us. We are continually enabled, empowered, and supported by God's grace.

God is making you bold, courageous, and fearless. Do not ignore the call. Act boldly.

Linda Post Bushkofsky is executive director of Women of the ELCA.



A M E N !

Storm of Renewal

by Catherine Malotky

ABIGAIL WAS SUCH A STUNNER, GOD. LIKE SO MANY WOMEN, SHE HAD LEARNED TO LIVE WITH HER MAN.

The story in 1 Samuel 25 doesn't tell us if she loved her husband, Nabal, but she was sticking it out. When he died, maybe she was thrilled. Or maybe she was a woman bound by duty.

Maybe. But could she have had the moxie to do what she did if she was bound by duty? Her decision to be hospitable to David and his men, despite Nabal's wishes, took chutzpah, real courage, and a wisdom that translated quickly into bold action. She could feel disaster coming on, and she responded with calculated charm. She played David, though with all good intentions. I suppose we are not called to manipulate each other. But Abigail was willing to challenge her husband's fragile ego and risk his scorn so that the king's wrath would not come crashing down on her community.

God, could we be like Abigail? Are we? How many of our foremothers learned to live with the conventions of their day and yet confronted the injustice done to them? What of our suffragist sisters at the beginning of the last century? What of those who marched with the abolitionists? What of the women who faced guns and hate to stare down racial prejudice only a few decades ago?

What of the women we know who are willing to stare down prejudice in small towns to be who they really are? Or those who raise their children in the midst of violence and poverty, yet find the energy and hope to laugh and make the best of

circumstances that would crumple most of us? What of our sisters far away who struggle to recover from the devastation of war, who grieve the loss of loved ones, or who struggle to love children conceived in violence?

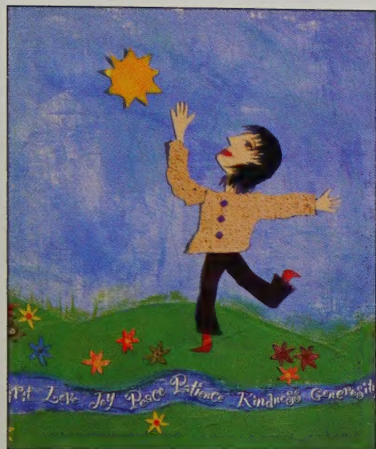
God, the power and strength of so many women rises up like a great storm. Stagnant air, stale and no longer productive, needs the cleansing a good storm can bring. When we are angry, impatient, or insulted by injustice, can you teach us to channel our power into a storm of renewal? Can you teach us to be wise, to turn the situation to good, to honor the earth and all who have been made in your image?

Abigail was not the only one. Jesus, too, rose up by loving fiercely and, in some ways, wastefully. He would not benefit from loving prostitutes and tax collectors. But the power of his love to transform his world was intensely real. And it was that greater good that had captured his heart as it had Abigail's.

Teach us, God, in the midst of our me-and-mine world, to use our power for the greater good. Do not let us retreat, unwilling to speak or stand, doubting our power to make a difference. We will not know peace until all are honored as your beloved children. We can be harbingers of peace. We can pave the way. Make us bold, God. Amen.

Catherine Malotky serves the ELCA Board of Pensions as retirement planning manager. An ordained pastor, she has also been an editor, teacher, parish pastor, and retreat leader.

Have you seen the new *LWT* poster/brochure?



The *Lutheran Woman Today* promotional poster/brochure for 2005-2006 is available. A copy has been included in the spring packet that was mailed to each congregation in late April. If you have not yet seen it, be sure to ask your church office staff about it.

We hope you will display it on church bulletin boards and in other prominent areas to lift up Women of the ELCA and *Lutheran Woman Today*. The poster is a great way to promote the Women's Organization and the magazine in your congregation and at meetings and conventions.

With specially commissioned art by Pamela Callahan, the poster has information about the 2005-2006 Bible study and new special features. It is useful for both current subscribers and for those who might have an interest in subscribing.

If you are planning a meeting, convention, or other event where you would like to make the poster/brochure available, we can help. Contact Women of the ELCA resource specialist Laura Barkenquast at 800-638-3522, ext. 2737.

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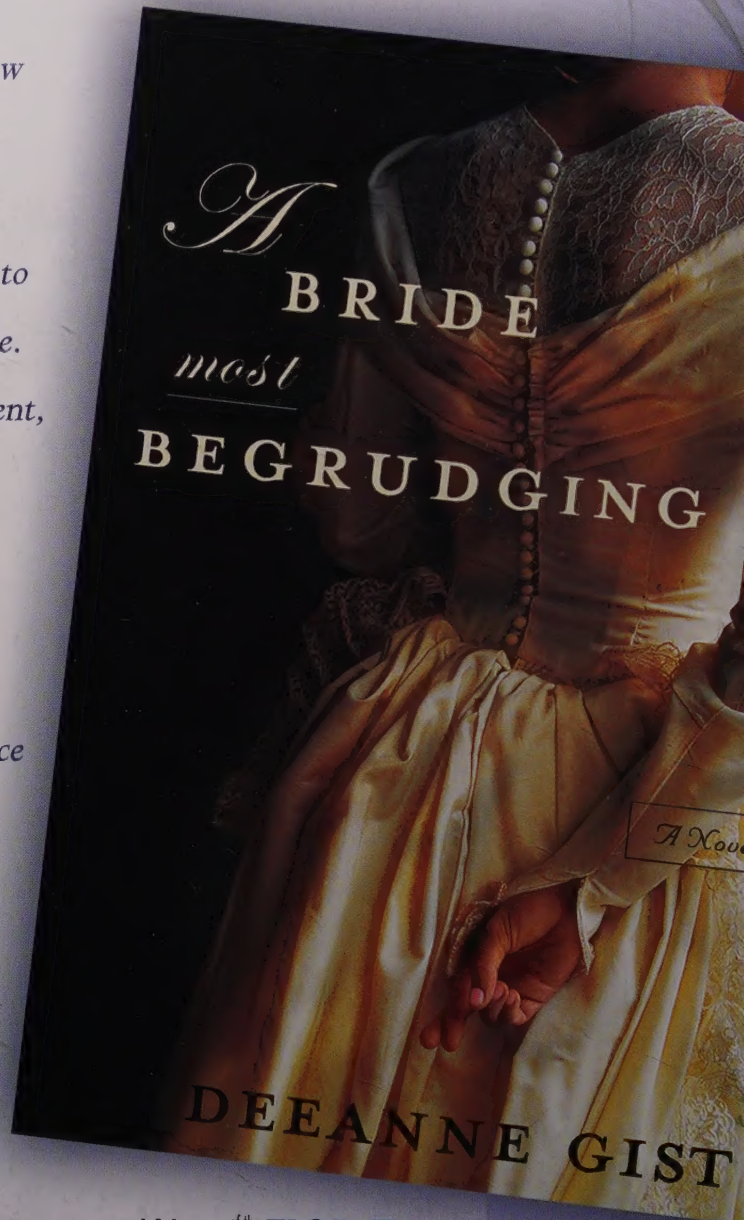
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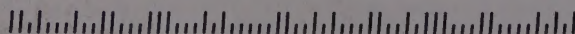
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